



The Holy See

***DISCORSO DI GIOVANNI PAOLO II
AL NUOVO AMBASCIATORE DEL GIAPPONE PRESSO
LA SANTA SEDE, S. E. IL SIGNOR TADAO JOHANNES ARAKI,
IN OCCASIONE DELLA PRESENTAZIONE
DELLE LETTERE CREDENZIALI***

Giovedì, 10 febbraio 1994

Mr. Ambassador,

Welcome to the Vatican, where I have the pleasure of receiving Your Excellency on the occasion of the presentation of the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to the Holy See.

In thanking you warmly for the very courteous words you addressed to me and which reveal your noble feelings, my thoughts turn first to Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress of Japan, whom I had the joy of welcoming last September in Castelgandolfo. In recalling that pleasant meeting, I would ask you, Mr. Ambassador, to convey to them my respectful greetings and renewed expression of esteem as well as my best wishes for their persons and their health. I also greet the members of your Government and invoke God's help on all the high officials serving the Japanese nation. Finally, I am pleased to be able to address, through you, a warm greeting to all your compatriots; I send them my wishes for happiness and prosperity.

In your kind speech you mentioned the Apostolic See's commitment to peace in the world and to the integral development of the world's peoples. I was touched by these marks of appreciation and thank you for them – they are for me and for my assistants an encouragement to pursue our service to mankind in this God-given world, of which we are the stewards and of which we are meant to increase the bounty according to the Creator's plan, that it may be shared by the entire human family.

I am pleased to hear you say that your country, of which much is expected in the concert of

nations, is prepared to participate actively in the achievement of the goals of the international community. I hope that the Japan of today will continue to champion the highest ideals, will be a herald of universality and will foster serene understanding between peoples, first and foremost in the other countries of Asia.

As the Second Vatican Council states, «Every branch of the human race possesses in itself and in its nobler traditions some part of the spiritual treasure which God has entrusted to men, even though many do not know the source of it» (Gaudium et spes, n. 86). Certainly, while it is right to strive to offer man the material advantages that are the fruit of your people's admirable dynamism and highly qualified expertise, it is important at the same time to promote the full spiritual development of the human person. As Your presence here, Mr. Ambassador, is a sign that your country appreciates the religious values and motivation they awaken in the human heart for the greater perfection of human existence and community life.

You alluded, Mr. Ambassador, to the pastoral journey Providence allowed me to make in your land in 1981 and which I will always remember. Indeed, this trip first provided me with the joy of meeting your compatriots and witnessing their venerable cultural traditions, notably their delicate attention to the mysterious life of nature, to the way it changes and to its beauty, I was equally able to appreciate the true respect they have for the spiritual life. When I spoke to the diplomats posted in Tokyo, I pointed out that the basis for any fruitful activity in promoting peaceful relations between nations is certainly the capacity for correctly and sympathetically valuing each people's specific qualities. I added further that your country, with its history and culture, constituted a real school for mutual understanding that benefits human relations. I am pleased to recall these words in addressing you today.

That visit also showed me that Christianity, in spite of its small number of adherents in Japan, was a certain point of reference, a recognized way to the divine, the way marked out by Christ himself, «God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God». Please allow me, Mr. Ambassador, to take the opportunity of this official ceremony to send a warm greeting to the members of the Catholic Church in Japan. In again expressing my concern for them, I invite them to grow in their faith, convinced that a life of witness remains the first apostolate. I also wish that, under the leadership of their Bishops, they continue to offer their service to the nation and that, especially in this International Year of the Family, they strive to develop family values, for the good of the society in which they live.

As you begin your mission, I offer you my best wishes for the successful accomplishment of your task. I have no doubt that it will help increase the already existing bonds of friendship between Japan and the Holy See. Be assured that you will find here all the attention and understanding you may need.

I wholeheartedly invoke the abundance of divine blessings on Your Excellency, on Their Majesties

the Emperor and Empress, on the Government and on the people of Japan.

**L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly edition in English n. 8 p.4.*

© Copyright 1994 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana