



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. Mr ANDROS A. NICOLAIDES, NEW AMBASSADOR
OF THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS TO THE HOLY SEE***

Saturday, 25 March 1995

Mr Ambassador,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you today to the Vatican and to accept the Letters of Credence appointing you Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Cyprus to the Holy See. I am grateful for the greetings and good wishes which you have conveyed from His Excellency President Glafcos Clerides, and I gladly reciprocate with the assurance of my prayers for the peace and prosperity of all your fellow citizens.

You have referred to the very ancient and noble heritage of Cyprus which, like the whole Eastern Mediterranean, witnessed the emergence of those deeply-rooted human values and ideals which are at the basis of European civilization. Some of the inhabitants of Cyprus were also among the first people outside of the Holy Land to hear the Gospel, when St Paul, accompanied by Barnabas, a member of the Cypriot Jewish community (cf. Acts 4:36), preached there in about 45 A. D. (cf. *ibid.*, 13:4-13). The ancient humanism, ennobled and perfected by Christianity's transcendent view of man and his destiny, eventually became the patrimony of all Europe.

Fifty years after the end of the Second World War, Europe has achieved a new degree of integration, built on and sustained by a solid network of transnational institutions whose purpose is to implement structures of economic, social and political cooperation for the benefit of all. At the same time, in that otherwise healthy body there have been outbreaks of a disease which has proved very difficult to cure. Longstanding ethnic rivalries and tendencies to individualism have given rise to new forms of separatism and discrimination, with their most terrible expression in the continuing bloody conflicts in the Balkans and the Caucasus.

And yet, we may well ask if the peoples themselves wanted these conflicts, or whether they have been obliged by their leaders to take the path of violence (cf. John Paul II, *Address to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See for the traditional exchange of New Year Greetings*, 6 [15 Jan. 1994]) . If leaders listened to the real aspirations of their peoples they would recognize the yearning for true peace and justice which is present everywhere and which forms the stable basis on which to build a just and prosperous society.

Your Excellency has noted that Cyprus too remains divided. It is my ardent hope that this situation will be speedily resolved. Elsewhere, the courageous efforts of far-sighted men and women have led to realistic and just solutions to conflicts and situations of deep mistrust which for years had seemed insoluble. Mutual respect, a willingness to admit past mistakes and a desire to engage in sincere dialogue will eventually lead the parties involved to create a new climate of agreement and reconciliation. Whatever the difficulties, "dialogue and negotiation are the obligatory path to peace" (John Paul II, *Message for the World Day of Peace 1989*, 10 [8 Dec. 1988]).

While the Catholic Church in Cyprus is small in numbers, she is ever committed to promoting the good of society as a whole, through the witness of her faith, the contribution of her social doctrine and the activities of her members especially in the areas of education, healthcare and social assistance. Cypriot Catholics, in union with their Orthodox brothers and sisters, and inspired by the precious treasure of religious faith and ethical values, are eager to see their country advance and be able to occupy its rightful place in Europe and in the world community.

I gratefully acknowledge the spirit of friendship and harmony which characterizes relations between the Catholic community of Cyprus and the Church of Cyprus. It remains my fervent prayer that the coming Millennium will see the restoration of that full communion which existed between us for the first thousand years of Christianity.

Mr Ambassador, as you begin your mission as your country's Representative to the Holy See it is my hope that the bonds of understanding and friendship between the Holy See and the Republic of Cyprus will be steadily strengthened. I assure you that the various departments of the Roman Curia will always be ready to help you in carrying out your duties. Upon yourself and all the people of Cyprus I cordially invoke the abundant blessings of Almighty God.

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