



# The Holy See

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**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II  
TO THE AMBASSADORS OF THE UNITED NATIONS  
EDUCATIONAL SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION\***

*Saturday 8 May 2004*

*Mr. President,*

*Your Excellencies!*1. With affection I greet you, Ambassadors of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, as you come to the Vatican, and I thank you Ambassador Omolewa for the kind sentiments you expressed. I hope that your visit to the Eternal City will enrich and renew you in your efforts to protect and promote authentic educational, scientific and cultural progress. The advancement of human society is directly related to the progress of culture. In reality culture is a specific way of "living" and "being" for mankind and, at the same time, it forms a bond which determines the unique character of man's social existence. Mankind, in fact, lives a truly human life because of culture, an important expression of which is found in the arts and sciences.2. The Church has always been a friend of the arts and sciences. The world's art heritage is actually a treasure of human creativity; it bears an eloquent witness to the intelligence of humanity that shares in the work of the divine Creator. The Church has always relied on the fine arts to help her celebrate, in a way that is truly dignified, fitting and beautiful, the gift of life and most particularly her sacred rites. In so doing, she has helped to develop an incomparable patrimony of music, art and literature that has made a significant contribution to the progress of culture. Furthermore, the Church has encouraged the development of the sciences, especially by promoting the dignity and value of human life.3. Her involvement, in practice, is expressed through the creation of numerous institutions such as the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, which recently celebrated its fourth centenary, the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences and the Pontifical Academy for Life. Unfortunately, in these difficult times we often find our progress threatened by the evils of war, poverty, racism and the exploitation of others. These harmful influences not only weigh heavily on our human existence, but are also a constraint upon our ability to build a better world.4. I pray that organizations such as UNESCO may remain an essential element in the construction of a true culture founded on peace, justice and fairness. As I offer you my very best wishes for the continuation of your mission, I invoke an abundance of divine Blessings upon you and all your colleagues.

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\* *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, vol. XXVII, 1, p.581-582.

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