



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO H.E. Mr PAVEL VOŠALÍK NEW AMBASSADOR
OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC TO THE HOLY SEE****

*Papal Summer Residence, Castel Gandolfo
Saturday, 27 September 2008*

Mr Ambassador,

I am pleased to receive you today as you present the Letters of Credence accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Czech Republic. I am grateful for your kind words as you begin the mission entrusted to you by your Government. Please express my respectful greetings to His Excellency, Mr Václav Klaus, President of the Republic, assuring him of my prayers for the well-being of all the people of your Country.

Mr Ambassador, I appreciate the emphasis you have placed on the influence of Christianity on the rich cultural heritage of your nation, and particularly the role that the Gospel played in bringing hope to the Czech people in times of oppression. Hope is indeed the timeless message which the Church offers to every generation, and it prompts her to participate in the global task of forging bonds of peace and goodwill among all peoples. She does this in a special way by her diplomatic activity, through which she extols the dignity of persons as destined for a life of communion with God and with one another.

Your nation, bolstered by the sense of solidarity that enabled her to emerge courageously from the collapse of totalitarianism, also desires to contribute to the welfare of the human family by enhancing international cooperation in the struggle against violence, hunger, poverty and other social ills. New avenues of influence will soon open for your country as it prepares to assume the Presidency of the Council of the European Union next year. I am confident that by setting clear goals and facilitating the involvement of all member States, the distinct honour of presiding over the Council for a six-month term will permit the Czech Republic to exercise strong leadership in

the shared endeavour of combining unity and diversity, national sovereignty and joint activity, and economic progress and social justice across the continent.

The Church is well aware of the many challenges facing Europe precisely at a time when its nations aspire to build a more stable international community for future generations. To move forward, its leaders are called to recognize that human happiness and well-being cannot be achieved through structures alone or by any single stratum of social or political life (cf. *Spe Salvi*, 24). The realization of a genuine culture worthy of man's noble vocation requires the harmonious cooperation of families, ecclesial communities, schools, businesses, community organizations and governmental institutions. Far from being ends in themselves, these entities are organized structures intended for the service of all, and are integrally connected to one another in the pursuit of the common good (cf. *Centesimus Annus*, 13).

For this reason, all of society benefits when the Church is afforded the right to exercise stewardship over the material and spiritual goods required for her ministry (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 88). In your nation, there are signs of progress in this area, but there is more to be done. I am confident that the special Commissions set up by your Government and Parliament for resolving outstanding issues regarding ecclesiastical property will move forward with honesty, fairness, and a genuine recognition of the Church's ability to contribute to the welfare of the Republic. In particular, I hope that such considerations will be kept in clear view while a solution is sought concerning the future of the Cathedral in Prague, which stands as a living witness to the rich cultural and religious heritage of your land, and testifies to the harmonious coexistence of Church and State.

By its very nature, the Gospel urges people of faith to offer themselves in loving service to their brothers and sisters without distinction and without counting the cost (cf. *Lk 10:25-37*). Love is the outward manifestation of the faith that sustains the community of believers and empowers them to be signs of hope for the world (cf. *Jn 13:35*). An example of this visible charity shines through the work of *Caritas*, whose members engage daily in a wide range of social services in your country. This is especially evident in the service it offers on behalf of expectant mothers, the homeless, the disabled, and the imprisoned. The coordination between *Caritas Czech Republic* and the governmental Ministries of Health, Labour and Social Affairs demonstrates the potential fruits that can result from close collaboration between State and Church agencies (cf. *Deus Caritas Est*, 30). I would emphasize here the enormous formative potential for young people, whose participation in such initiatives teaches them that genuine solidarity does not merely consist in supplying material goods but in making a gift of oneself (cf. *Lk 17:33*). Moreover, as the Czech Republic searches to expand ways of participating in the task of shaping a more cohesive and cooperative international community, we should not forget the many Czech citizens already serving abroad in long-term development and aid projects under the auspices of *Caritas* and other humanitarian organizations. I heartily encourage their efforts and commend the generosity of all your fellow citizens who creatively seek ways to serve the common good both within your nation and across the globe.

Before closing, Your Excellency, allow me to express my sincere condolences to you and your fellow citizens upon the tragic death of Mr Ivo Žďárek, Ambassador of the Czech Republic to Pakistan, who was among the victims killed in the recent attack in Islamabad. I pray daily for an end to such acts of aggression, and I encourage all those engaged in diplomatic service to dedicate themselves ever more keenly to facilitating peace and ensuring security throughout the world.

As you begin your service, Mr Ambassador, I extend cordial wishes that the important mission entrusted to you will be fruitful. Please know that the offices of the Roman Curia are eager to assist you in the fulfilment of your duties. Asking you kindly to assure the people of the Czech Republic of my prayers and esteem, I invoke upon them an abundance of divine blessings and entrust them to the loving providence of Almighty God.

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