



The Holy See

Discurso al Embajador de de los PAISES BAJOS,

*Excmo. Sr. Baron Seger Jan Joseph VAN VOORST TOT VOORST*5 de junio de 1986*

Your Excellency,

1. I am happy to welcome you. The words you have just spoken are a proof of the seriousness with which you are embarking upon your mission as Ambassador to the Holy See. Rest assured that you shall find here the necessary support to accomplish successfully your important task, as have your predecessors before you.

You are sent here by Her Majesty Queen Beatrix whose visit to the Vatican was greatly appreciated and who welcomed me so warmly in her Royal Palace of Huis teh Bosch. Indeed, I have pleasant memories of her kind hospitality and of the conversations we had on both occasions. I would like to ask Your Excellency to thank Her Majesty for the greetings she sent and to express on my behalf my respectful consideration and my cordial wishes for the Royal Family and for your dear country.

2. You have brought back delightful memories of my apostolic journey to your country It was an unusual and memorable occasion and it provided the opportunity to strengthen the bonds that exist between the Holy See and the Kingdom of the Netherlands, its government, all its people and, of course, in a privileged manner its Catholic bishops and ecclesial communities, within the framework of a visit that was essentially pastoral.

I knew well that in coming to your country I was encountering not only a nation with a prestigious cultural and artistic past, but also a people that is hard working, courageous, enterprising, anxious to translate ideals into practical commitments, and always in love with freedom. All of this was confirmed for me in the various stages of my journey to the beautiful cities steeped in history – you mentioned the Paushuize in Utrecht that belonged to my predecessor Adrian VI – and through the green countryside that shows the signs of careful and persistent work, as well as through the testimonies I received. I also observed how deeply the Christian faith has molded the souls of the people and the profound impact it still has on many social and cultural institutions, while at the same time freedom of religion is enjoyed by all denominations.

3. With respect to political involvement, Your Excellency has stressed the active participation of the Netherlands in international life, its concern for strengthening peace wherever it is threatened, its desire to see that justice is more widely enforced and human rights effectively guaranteed. Your government plays a special role, often a determining one, in the activities of various European institutions. You know well the interest that the Holy See has in all these efforts to foster greater brotherhood and solidarity within the human community through the development and implementation of appropriate political, legal and economic measures

I would like to mention one point in particular that should be a source of pride to your country: I am thinking of the generosity with which the people and the government of the Netherlands participate in the development of less fortunate nations in the Third World. The Catholic community strongly supports this commitment. Is it not in the same spirit that your Christian compatriots contributed to the evangelization of mission countries and continue today their involvement in the young Churches? The people of the Netherlands have a feeling for the needs of others; they know how to open themselves to the universal, through actions rather than words. The Holy See rejoices in this and congratulates you!

4. Your Excellency, you have rightly insisted on the specifically spiritual mission of the Church and the Holy See which is its centre. Thus, the primary concern of the Church is the formation of consciences; local Churches in every country labour to accomplish this in communion with Peter's successor. I will gladly pray for the salvation of your fellow citizens, as you have asked me to do. And salvation includes the promotion of moral and spiritual values.

The Church would be failing in its duties if it did not attempt to enlighten consciences, to point out evils that are a threat both to Christian life and to the wholeness of man, to encourage that which leads to truth and to the good of humanity. She has no direct power over the laws and institutions of the State, chosen democratically by the citizens in all freedom. However, she will always distinguish between that which is legally allowed and that which is moral, consistent with a properly formed conscience. This is true, for example, of the issue of respect for life from the moment of conception, or in serious illness and old age. Indeed, the Church is always calling consciences to a moral awakening.

In truth, it is up to the bishops of each country to lead their fellow citizens in reflecting on these principles: they are the principles of the Universal Church, upheld by the Holy See. And, indeed, your bishops have not failed to do so in the two areas that I have just mentioned. Of course, there are many other moral problems of great complexity and we must note that younger generations especially are very disoriented, often seeking escape in drugs and in degrading behaviour. Who would not wish to be involved in educating them to authentic freedom, to the search for truth, to respect for love and family values? For her part, the Church wishes with all her might to be involved in this task while remaining in her place, and respectful of the consciences of others. She

has no doubt that she will encounter in this the full assent of public officials who are responsible for the common good of the people. It is they who are in a better position to see that here there is a challenge that must be met, for the future of the nation, for its true human and spiritual progress, in harmony with the Christian heritage that has marked it so profoundly and continues to be, for those who accept it, a source of life.

Your Excellency, these are the feelings I have in my heart as you start on your diplomatic mission to the Holy See. Before God, I express the best wishes for you, for the people of the Netherlands and for their leaders, and I invoke for them the blessings of the One who gives strength, joy and light to people of good will.

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