



The Holy See

***DISCOURS DU SAINT-PÈRE JEAN-PAUL II
À S. E. MONSIEUR ŠTEFAN FALEŽ, NOUVEL
AMBASSADEUR DE LA RÉPUBLIQUE DE
SLOVÉNIE PRÈS LE SAINT-SIÈGE****

Samedi, 14 novembre 1992

Mr. Ambassador,

It is with joy that I accept from Your Excellency's hands the Letters accrediting you to the Apostolic See as the first Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Slovenia. This act represents an important milestone in relations between the Holy See and the Slovenian nation, whose people have for centuries aspired to independence and freedom in order better to develop the cultural and spiritual wealth which they possess.

I am touched by the deferential message from the civil authorities and your fellow citizens' sentiments of affection for the Successor of Peter, which you expressed to me. I would be grateful if you express my gratitude to His Excellency Mr Milan Kucan, President of the Executive Council of the Republic of Slovenia, and to the members of the government of your country. Please convey to all your fellow citizens my cordial greeting and fervent best wishes at this turning point in their national history!

Mr. Ambassador, you mentioned the Christian roots which are the pride of Slovenians. Saints Cyril and Methodius, zealous missionaries and apostles to Central Europe, promoted an authentic Slav culture. They also contributed to making all the nations of this part of the continent kindred peoples. You yourself mentioned in your history of the country the influence of the moral and spiritual values of Christianity, values which were a leaven of hope and an element of unity, particularly in the darkest and most painful days in the life and history of the Slovenian people. Between the Baptism of the princes of Greater Carantania [Carinthia] in the eighth century and the fall of the totalitarian regimes, successive generations kept alive the hope in the day when they

would enjoy freedom. With the evolution of the Yugoslav Federation and the fall of communism in the countries of the East, Slovenia has regained its independence. The identity of your people is being achieved little by little, as you are establishing the democratic State that seeks to make your country a land of well-being for the people of today and for future generations. The common culture fosters the convergence of personal and collective aspirations in building the country. It allows for the unification of the various components of the population and creates the consciousness of belonging to a single nation. It is also an appeal to the citizens to look beyond their own frontiers in order to establish relations and experience fruitful cooperation with other human communities. Bonds have not been totally broken with your brothers and sisters from the former Yugoslav Federation. We are thinking, especially of the refugees and those who are in situations of extreme poverty and precariousness because they have been cruelly treated by war. With the sense of solidarity and acceptance which strongly marks the Slav soul, together with the other nations of Europe and the world you tirelessly seek to meet the most immediate needs of displaced or expelled persons.

Mr. Ambassador, you were so kind as to mention the Holy See's active presence in international life, its concern is to allow all peoples to live in peace within their own borders: it works with perseverance to make each person's voice heard and basic human dignity recognized. Taking inspiration from Christ and his Gospel message, the Catholic Church proclaims the inalienable freedom of individuals and peoples. She wants to help the nations in their efforts to conquer injustice and inequality of all kinds using the instruments of peace, fraternal dialogue and negotiation to find the necessary consensus for building a world in which every person, regardless of race or religion, can find the happiness he desires. I am pleased to hear you say that the Apostolic See's initiatives to foster peace and justice, to resolve disagreements and intensify constructive relations among peoples, has found a favourable echo in the civil authorities of your country and in your fellow citizens. In setting out on this path, each according to his role, every citizen of the continent is a partner in the political, economic and social life of his country and of the renewed Europe, too. He can give the best of himself for the good of his brothers and sisters.

In Slovenia the Catholic Church is exercising her specific mission of proclaiming the Gospel. This spiritual task requires that the administration of Dioceses be reorganized. The Bishops are seeking to accomplish this with the material means at their disposal and as a result of the Church's freedom, which the State recognizes. Communion among the Pastors is expressed within the new Slovenian Episcopal Conference. The Church's specific vocation is also expressed through the pastoral, charitable and social work to which Christian communities are deeply committed, such as schools, State institutions, hospitals, prisons and the army. I take this opportunity to express through you my warm greetings to all the Catholics of your country. By their initiatives they seek to help their brothers and sisters deepen the spiritual meaning of their lives; they want to contribute to building a society of even greater justice and solidarity, one which respects the convictions and religious practices of each person. By putting places of worship at the disposal of Orthodox and Protestant communities, they have the opportunity to express their solidarity through fraternal

acceptance. With all Slovenians, the Church's Pastors are particularly concerned to teach basic human and spiritual values to the young people who are the nation's wealth, and who tomorrow will be the leaders of society. In various committed activities they want to strengthen bonds with the authorities through an ongoing dialogue which aims at establishing stable accords so that, within the context of each one's responsibility, they can pursue a fruitful cooperation for the service of all.

As you begin your mission as representative of the Republic of Slovenia to the Holy See, I offer you, Mr. Ambassador, my best wishes. Because of its strategic position where Western Europe meets the Balkan States, your country's vocation is to reunite the cultures which for a long time have been distanced because of events. For their part, the new diplomatic relations are proof that the bonds have remained alive and strong despite history's vicissitudes. In the fulfilment of your tasks, be assured that you will always find among my coworkers whom you know well because of your long familiarity with the Roman Curia the attentive support and cordial understanding which you will need.

Upon Your Excellency, the people and leaders of Slovenia, I cordially invoke an abundance of divine blessings.

**L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly edition in English n. 48 p.18.*

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