



The Holy See

***DISCOURS DU SAINT-PÈRE JEAN-PAUL II
À S. Exc. MONSIEUR LÉONARD H. LEGAULT,
NOUVEL AMBASSADEUR DU CANADA
PRÈS LE SAINT-SIÈGE****

Samedi 6 novembre 1993

Mr. Ambassador,

I have great pleasure in welcoming Your Excellency as you present the Letters accrediting you to the Holy See as the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Canada. I was touched by the courtesy of your words, which show a keen understanding of the Holy See's activity and mission.

Mr Ambassador, you have presented some pertinent reflections on various aspects of international life, rightly recalling the active place that Canada occupies in it. There are numerous fields of endeavour in the world where one meets your compatriots, officially present on behalf of the authorities or participating in various generous organizations of private initiative. Indeed, it is essential to combine everyone's good will to work as effectively as possible at reinforcing peace, defending human dignity, furthering development and protecting humanity's natural heritage.

In these domains, the concerns you have mentioned naturally coincide with those of the Church, for whom the requirements of peace are inseparable from man's deep aspirations to self-fulfilment, social interaction and effective solidarity over and above any kind of frontier. The events which have been occurring over the past few years in Europe and elsewhere in the world confirm the need for an intense cooperation of peoples and States in order to resolve conflicts, to support the weakest societies and to protect human rights. In Canada, the Holy See is pleased to find a broad convergence of viewpoints on the serious concerns which I am only touching on here.

Mr Ambassador, in welcoming you I would like to express my affection for the whole Canadian

nation which you represent. Memories of my visits to your land come to mind, such as happy moments at gatherings characterized by a human warmth and an intellectual and spiritual vigour that I can never forget. As you yourself have recalled, Canada must face difficulties that are affecting the whole developed world, from the economic point of view no doubt, but also at the level of the deepest motivations in people's lives. Men and women today must rediscover their true reasons for living, the openness to others which is necessary for life in society, the essential values upholding education, the qualities of a thriving family life for all generations, the precious memory of the best cultural traditions, the spiritual dimension which is a basic trait of the human person.

Your efforts not to leave any of your brothers and sisters by the wayside, your concern to give each the chance to be fulfilled in his own culture and to express himself in his own language - I am thinking here specifically of the measures taken to respond to the expectations of the indigenous peoples of your land - your wish to expand the horizon of each individual to global dimensions, all this witnesses to the vitality of a nation which is facing the challenges of the age. It is with pleasure that I express my wishes for Canada's prosperity, certain that its people possess all the necessary dynamism to build its future.

This year, as you know, the Canadian Bishops are making their *ad limina* visits; I have then the opportunity to discuss the life of the Church in your country with them. But at this solemn audience, I am just as eager to address a warm greeting to the Catholics of the various regions of your vast country. They are the heirs to the great founders, pastors, spiritual men and women with striking courage and Gospel charity, as is testified by the canonizations and beatifications which I have been able to celebrate. I was glad to hear you recall the most recent of these beatifications, that of Dina Belanger, an almost contemporary figure, a flower of holiness that blossomed in one of the many religious communities which have contributed to forming the features of the Canadian Church.

Of course, the Dioceses, parishes and different institutions in your country where the Church lives and works are faced with the consequences of the remarkable changes that have taken place in society over the past few decades. I am confident that by welcoming the spiritual and moral demands of the Gospel with courage, their efforts to renew the fabric of the Church will be repaid. I know that they desire to contribute generously to the life of the whole nation, through their loyal activity as citizens as well as through their specific contributions: thus it is fortunate that by preserving the possibility of giving a Christian education to their children, they are able to offer the young generations the best of their sense of humanity. I appreciate their dynamic presence in the world of culture. They are especially concerned to foster the quality of family life, and by participating in all aspects of social life, to be the witnesses of a brotherhood that is particularly sensitive to the most needy. It is in this spirit that Catholics are convinced they can best serve their country.

Your Excellency, at the end of this meeting, I would like to repeat my cordial wishes of welcome. Be assured that you can count on the availability and support of my assistants in fulfilling the obligations of your mission.

I pray God to grant an abundance of his gifts on yourself and your family, to the members of your embassy, as well as to the Canadian people and their leaders.

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