



# The Holy See

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**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II  
TO THE NEW AMBASSADOR OF SLOVENIA  
TO THE HOLY SEE\***

*Thursday, 5 September 2002*

*Mr Ambassador,*

1. I am pleased to receive from you the Letters with which the President of the Republic accredits you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Slovenia to the Holy See. As I offer you my cordial welcome, I also express deep gratitude for the courteous greeting and good wishes that the President, Mr Milan Kucan, has addressed to me through you.

I warmly recall the two visits that Divine Providence has granted me to make to Slovenia. The meetings I have had at the Vatican with the President of the Republic and other Government officials and my visits have helped to reinforce the dialogue that has existed for centuries between the Slovenian people and the Apostolic See.

The Holy See appreciates your country's action for peace and cooperation among the nations and regards positively the effort being made to enter the European Union as a full member. Slovenia's independence allowed its European soul to emerge along with the role it carries out as a peaceful and fruitful meeting place of the different peoples of the continent.

Dialogue with other cultures is rich and fruitful to the extent that it is sincere and respectful. While the Slovenian nation is open to meeting and confronting different traditions, ways of being and guiding values, it firmly intends to preserve its own identity of which it is justifiably proud. The Slovenian people know that if this heritage, passed down to them by their forefathers, is impoverished, the nation could be disoriented as it faces the globalization process that is the hallmark of our time.

The Christian heritage, which for centuries has been the foundation of civic life in your country and is still a source of energy for it, is a valid contribution to offer to the consolidation of a civilization in Europe that fosters mutual understanding among peoples. For this reason, the vocation to act as a bridge between different cultures, fostering a useful exchange between them has the full support and encouragement of the Holy See.

2. At the time when many are making an effort to build "the common house of Europe" with legislative tools that aim at promoting unity and solidarity among the peoples of the continent, one must pay attention to the values on which it is based. Some of these values constitute the patrimony of European humanism and continue to ensure its propagation in the history of civilization. It is an undeniable fact that the 2,000-year tradition of Judaeo-Christian origin was able to harmonize, consolidate and promote the basic principles of European civilization that took root in a variety of cultures. It can continue to provide a valuable ethical frame of reference for European peoples.

The Holy See very much hopes that, in the future as well, the identity and role of the Church will be protected since she has always in many ways carried out what has proved to be a crucial role in teaching the fundamental principles of civic coexistence, in offering answers to basic questions about the meaning of life, in protecting and promoting the culture and identity of the different peoples.

One must react to every attempt to exclude from the building of the new Europe the contribution of Christianity because this would remove important energies from the process of establishing civil coexistence ethically and culturally on the continent.

3. The Catholic Church does not seek privileges but only to carry out her mission for the good of the entire Slovenian society. For this reason she is grateful to the civil authorities who maintain positive relations with the ecclesial community in a spirit of dialogue and with full respect for each one's specific areas of responsibility.

The Agreement between the Republic of Slovenia and the Holy See signed last 14 December is a significant example of mutual cooperation. I want to express the keen hope that it may now be approved by the legislative organs to which it has been submitted, in order to become operative without delay. It is an agreement that guarantees the basic right to religious freedom. As an instrument which regulates the relations between the Church and the State in a particular, but not exclusive way, it serves the good of the Catholic community and it is both a point of arrival and a starting point for further agreements.

4. Mr Ambassador, these are a few of the thoughts that I wish to share with you at the moment when you take up the important mission that your Government has entrusted to you. I assure you that you will always be able to count on the help of my collaborators for the fruitful realization of

your mission.

Please convey to the President, the government authorities and the people whom you represent, my respectful greeting, along with my fervent good wishes for the prosperity and progress of Slovenia, in peace and justice. I confirm these sentiments with the assurance of my prayers, as I invoke the Blessings of Almighty God upon you and upon all your fellow-citizens.

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