



The Holy See

*ADDRESS OF PAUL VI TO THE NEW AMBASSADOR OF FINLAND TO THE HOLY SEE**

Thursday, 12 December 1968

Mr. Ambassador.

We receive with the liveliest satisfaction the Letters of Credence that you present to Us and We are happy to greet in your person the Ambassador of a nation with which the Holy See has maintained, for more than 25 years, the most cordial relations.

Your Excellency has alluded to the dark days of the Second World War when our relations were established. It was in 1942. We were then in the Secretariat of State and have a very clear memory of this episode and of the vigour with which Our Predecessor, Pius XII, welcoming the first and very worthy representative of your country, Mgr. George Gripenberg, underlined "the inviolable right of every nation, large or small, to determine its own destiny, exclusive of all foreign pressure" (*Discourses and Radio Talks of His Holiness, Pius XII, IV, p. 161*).

In an hour when it seemed that only force of arms counted, these words of faith and of courage – words always current; experience has recently shown that – were an affirmation of the law as well as an appeal to hope. Finland, after having passed through the sad period of the war, proudly reaffirmed the independence she had proclaimed in 1917 and each one can attest today, at the end of this half century of autonomous life, what trials she has known in presenting her personality in the concert of nations.

For its part, the Holy See is happy and honoured, Mr. Ambassador, to maintain relations with your country. First, because of its history: Christianity, it can be said, is at the origin of this history and has accompanied its development.

The Catholic community in Finland today, it is true, is very small. But two of its characteristics are

precious to Us. In the first place, this community exists in freedom, which is all to the honour of your people and assures the Catholic Church in your country a peaceful and dignified life. Then, Our sons are on friendly terms with their Christian brothers, Lutheran Evangelicals, who form the majority of the Finnish population. And We like to think that in this ecumenical climate that has developed since the recent Vatican Council, these relations of fraternal charity will increase and bear fruit for the greatest good of both.

We have another reason for appreciating the relations that the Holy See has with your country: it is the high degree of culture and civilization that has been acquired in the course of centuries. The Finnish nation represents a remarkable ethnic-cultural expression in Northern Europe; on the other hand, as Your Excellency rightly pointed out, she has been animated by a spirit of active neutrality in the service of peace, and joins, in this sphere, in one of the principal anxieties of the Holy See at the present time.

We appreciate, Mr. Ambassador, very specially, the wishes that you bring from His Excellency, the President of the Republic of Finland, to whom We ask you to transmit, in return, Our own very fervent wishes.

Welcoming with no less satisfaction the expression of sentiments that you personally feel at the moment when you begin your new and noble mission, We wholeheartedly invoke on the happy unfolding of this mission, as well as on yourself, your family, your country and its governors, the abundant blessings of the All-powerful God.

*ORa n.39 p.4.