



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE
BOLLETTINO

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIÈGE PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE SALA DE IMPRENSA DA SANTA SÉ
BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

N. 0607

Giovedì 16.12.2004

**LE LETTERE CREDENZIALI DEGLI AMBASCIATORI DI: MALAWI, THAILANDIA,
LUSSEMBURGO, KENYA, NORVEGIA**

LE LETTERE CREDENZIALI DEGLI AMBASCIATORI DI: MALAWI, THAILANDIA, LUSSEMBURGO, KENYA,
NORVEGIA

- DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DI MALAWI PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. IL SIGNOR GILTON BAZILIO CHIWAULA
- DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DI THAILANDIA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. IL SIGNOR PRADAP PIBULSONGGRAM
- DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DI LUSSEMBURGO PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. IL SIGNOR GEORGES SANTER
- DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DEL KENYA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. LA SIGNORA RAYCHELLE AWUOR OMAMO
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Alle ore 11 di questa mattina, il Santo Padre ha ricevuto in Udienza, in occasione della presentazione delle Lettere Credenziali, le Loro Eccellenze i Signori Ambasciatori di: Malawi, Thailandia, Lussemburgo, Kenya e Norvegia.

Di seguito pubblichiamo i discorsi consegnati dal Papa agli Ambasciatori degli Stati sopra elencati, nonché i cenni biografici essenziali di ciascuno:

- DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DI MALAWI PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. IL SIGNOR GILTON BAZILIO CHIWAULA

Mr Ambassador,

I am pleased to welcome you to the Vatican and to accept the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Malawi to the Holy See. I would like to express my gratitude for the greetings which you bring from your President, His Excellency Dr Bingu wa Mutharika. Your presence here reminds me of my visit to Malawi in 1989, when I was welcomed with such warmth. I would ask you kindly to convey my cordial greetings to His Excellency and to assure him of my continuing prayers for the peace and well-being of your nation.

The people of your Continent have much to offer the rest of the world concerning respect for the family. In this connection, I would encourage them to continue to promote stable family life as the proper environment in which to bring up children, thereby building firm foundations for the future of society. In particular, I would urge your Government to resist any attempts by outside agencies to impose programmes of economic assistance tied to the promotion of sterilization and contraception. Not only are such campaigns "affronts to the dignity of the person and the family" (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 234), but they also undermine the natural growth and progress of nations. However serious the social and health-care problems facing your country and your Continent, the good of your people demands the pursuit of authentic human development, responding not simply to their material needs but also to their cultural, moral and spiritual aspirations. "Development which is merely economic is incapable of setting man free; on the contrary, it will end by enslaving him further" (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 46).

The alarmingly rapid spread of AIDS demands renewed efforts on the part of the international community and the Government of Malawi to find acceptable ways of combating the disease and providing proper care for the sick and their families. Public authorities and faith communities need to work together to promote fidelity within marriage and abstinence outside it as the most effective safeguards against infection. Every effort should be made to educate the people about AIDS, so as to deter them from resorting to superstitious and traditional practices which can lead to the further spread of the virus. I thank you for expressing your appreciation of the Church's contribution to health care in your country, and I pledge the continued support of all our Catholic institutions and medical personnel involved in this important work.

You have spoken of the part played by the Catholic Bishops in your country's transition to democracy, and I thank you for those gracious words with which you describe the Church as the "conscience" of the Malawi nation. The Catholic Church welcomes the opportunity to cooperate with the Government by instructing and informing the faithful, "particularly those involved in political life, so that their actions may always serve the integral promotion of the human person and the common good" (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Doctrinal Note on Some Questions Regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life*, 6). Indeed she has a duty to do so, while recognizing the autonomy and independence of the political community in its proper sphere (cf. *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 424).

The extreme poverty afflicting so much of the population of Malawi demands urgent action from the rest of the world. I am confident that the Government will strive to do all in its power to provide adequate financial support for all humanitarian and educational programmes. In this regard, every effort must be made to tackle corruption and thus achieve maximum transparency and accountability in the use of international aid. Through her institutes of education and charitable agencies, the Church remains determined to offer whatever assistance she can, so that the citizens of your country may be able to live with proper human dignity.

In offering my best wishes for the success of your mission, I would like to assure you that the various departments of the Roman Curia are ready to provide help and support in the fulfilment of your duties. Upon Your Excellency and all the people of Malawi I cordially invoke God's abundant blessings.

S.E. il Signor Gilton Bazilio Chiwaula
Ambasciatore di Malawi presso la Santa Sede

È nato il 1° gennaio 1950 a Mlangali (Malawi).

È sposato ed ha quattro figli.

Ha conseguito la laurea in Economia e Commercio presso l'Università di Melbourne (Australia, 1975).

Dopo aver ricoperto ruoli direttivi presso la Ragioneria dello Stato ed il Ministero del Lavoro del Malawi, è stato chiamato ad assumere i seguenti incarichi: Ragioniere Generale dello Stato (1981-1989); Segretario al Tesoro (1989-1992); Revisore Generale dei Conti (1992-1997); Direttore dell'Ufficio anti-corruzione (1997-2002); Consigliere del Presidente (2002-2003).

Dal 2003 è anche Ambasciatore a Berlino, ove risiede.

Ha partecipato a numerosi consessi internazionali della Banca Mondiale e delle Nazioni Unite in materia economica.

[01987-02.01] [Original text: English]

• DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DI THAILANDIA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. IL SIGNOR PRADAP PIBULSONGGRAM

Mr Ambassador,

I am pleased to welcome you to the Vatican and to accept the Letters of Credence appointing you Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of Thailand to the Holy See. I am grateful for the kind greetings which you bring from His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, and I request that you convey to him the assurance of my prayers for your country and its people. The long-standing ties between the Kingdom of Thailand and the Holy See find their origins in the seventeenth century when King Narai the Great and Pope Innocent XI began a cordial and friendly relationship. Indeed, this association remains a source of pride for both parties.

Thailand continues admirably to cultivate a climate of religious tolerance and peaceful coexistence among its citizens. In fact, this noble tradition in which the followers of differing beliefs live together in harmony is one of the foundations of your country. Examples of this are found not only in the Crown's role as the protector of the nation's moral and religious values but also in the new constitution's guarantee of the right to full religious expression and religious liberty. It is regrettable, however, that even in the most tolerant of societies challenges to peaceful relationships among peoples can occur. In this regard, I assure Your Excellency that the Catholic Church has considerable experience in the field of inter-religious relations and is always willing to assist in fostering and facilitating dialogue to help resolve problems which may arise.

One of the primary ways the Church supports civil society in developing respect and understanding between diverse groups is through her commitment to education. Proper instruction makes it possible for people to acquire the necessary knowledge to become fully contributing members of society, promoting the solidarity and respect which unite individuals, families, peoples and nations. Humanity yearns for harmony and serenity, and it is only through the active and enlightened participation of all sectors of public life that this desire can be fulfilled. Education rooted in authentic values is the key to the future, the heart of proper communication and the way towards real development.

In Your Excellency's remarks you mentioned King Bhumibol Adulyadej's recognition that the people of Thailand need to offer one another mutual support. His philosophy for economic reform makes that clear, as it seeks to help those at the lowest economic levels by providing access to local resources and technology. I urge your nation to continue to assist those who are most in need so that they may obtain the economic self-sufficiency to which they have a right. One of the most effective ways to ensure this is by safeguarding family life. In fact, family life shapes the social and ethical order of human work and is the true source of genuine economic progress (cf. Encyclical Letter *Laborem Exercens*, 10). In Asia the family has traditionally enjoyed a high level of esteem, regarded not only as the heart of interpersonal relationships but also as a place of economic security for its members. "The Family, therefore, must rightfully be seen as an essential agent of economic life, guided not by the market mentality but by the logic of sharing and solidarity among generations" (*Compendium of the Social*

Doctrine of the Church, 248). It is my hope that your Government will foster an ever greater respect for the importance of the family, convincing young people that material wealth and quick economic gain are no replacement for the loving rapport found in "domestic society".

Your Excellency has indicated the important role Thailand plays in regional and global politics. The growth of your country's influence in the international community is a clear sign of its achievements in the social and political arenas. I pray that the civil authority will continue to participate actively in seeking solutions to today's grave global problems. Be assured that the Church remains committed to assist in this challenge, promoting respect for international law and, in particular, encouraging the international community to continue its search for multilateral mechanisms which will lead to the peaceful resolution of conflict and to wider access to humanitarian aid.

Mr Ambassador, I offer you my best wishes at the beginning of your mission, and assure you of the readiness of the offices of the Holy See to assist you in your work. I invoke upon you and the beloved people of the Kingdom of Thailand abundant divine blessings.

S.E. il Signor Pradap Pibulsonggram
Ambasciatore di Thailandia presso la Santa Sede

È nato il 13 giugno 1949.

È vedovo ed ha due figli.

Laureato in Scienze Politiche (Università di Auckland, Nuova Zelanda), ha intrapreso la carriera diplomatica nel 1973, ricoprendo i seguenti incarichi: Funzionario del Ministero degli Esteri (1973-1977); Secondo Segretario di Ambasciata in Egitto (1978-1980); Primo Segretario di Ambasciata presso il Ministero degli Affari Esteri (1981-1984); Consigliere e successivamente Ministro Consigliere di Ambasciata negli Stati Uniti d'America (1985-1988); Vice Direttore Generale di Dipartimento (1989-1991) ed in seguito Direttore Generale di Dipartimento, col rango di Ambasciatore, presso il Ministero degli Esteri; Ambasciatore in Ungheria (1995-1999);

Direttore Generale presso il Ministero degli Esteri (2000-2003).

Attualmente è anche Ambasciatore in Svizzera, ove risiede.

[01986-02.01] [Original text: English]

• DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DI LUSSEMBURGO PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. IL SIGNOR GEORGES SANTER

Monsieur l'Ambassadeur,

1. Je suis heureux d'accueillir Votre Excellence en cette circonstance solennelle de la présentation des Lettres qui L'accréditent en qualité d'Ambassadeur extraordinaire et plénipotentiaire du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg près le Saint-Siège.

Je vous remercie vivement, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, du cordial message de salutations que vous m'avez adressé de la part de Son Altesse Royale le Grand-Duc Henri. Me souvenant avec plaisir de sa récente visite et toujours sensible à son attention délicate à l'égard du Siège apostolique, je vous saurais gré de Lui exprimer en retour mes vœux respectueux pour sa personne, pour la famille grand-ducale, ainsi que pour le peuple luxembourgeois.

2. En cette période de l'année où nos regards sont tournés vers le Prince de la Paix qui doit venir (cf. *Is* 9, 5), nous ressentons plus vivement les drames de la violence et de la guerre qui affectent tant de nos contemporains, et nous éprouvons l'impérieuse nécessité de construire un avenir de paix pour tous les hommes.

Comme l'Église catholique l'a souvent rappelé, la paix et le développement vont de pair et, à l'heure de la mondialisation des échanges, les pays les plus riches ont donc une responsabilité particulière dans la construction de la paix. Les pays d'Europe, qui se sont associés, à l'origine, pour conjurer le recours à la guerre et pour établir les conditions d'une paix durable entre eux, forment aujourd'hui, au sein de l'Union européenne, un pôle politique et économique puissant qui a, lui aussi, un devoir particulier à l'égard du développement et de la paix. Loin de vouloir constituer seulement un îlot de paix et de prospérité qui serait clos sur lui-même et qui devrait se protéger des incursions extérieures, l'Europe doit continuer à se montrer ouverte et exemplaire. C'est en effet en partageant ses richesses, économiques, sociales, religieuses et culturelles, et en accueillant celles des autres, qu'elle assumera sa véritable mission. Je ne doute pas que votre pays, qui assurera prochainement la présidence de l'Union, travaille dans ce sens, en contribuant notamment à ce que le processus d'intégration actuellement à l'œuvre entre l'Ouest et l'Est du continent européen s'accompagne aussi d'un nécessaire dialogue et de l'intensification des échanges entre le Nord et le Sud de notre planète.

3. Votre pays, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, est l'un des plus développés dans l'Europe d'aujourd'hui, et sa population jouit d'un très haut niveau de vie. Consciente de sa richesse et des responsabilités qu'elle implique, la société luxembourgeoise exerce pleinement son devoir de solidarité avec les pays plus pauvres, notamment dans le continent africain. J'invite vos concitoyens à rester accueillants aux étrangers, qui constituent une bonne part de la population du pays, et à s'efforcer également de nouer des liens de convivialité entre les différentes couches de la société, afin d'éviter les phénomènes de marginalisation sociale qui, trop souvent, affectent aussi les sociétés les plus développées du monde contemporain.

4. Je me réjouis de savoir que votre gouvernement a la volonté d'aider les familles en renforçant les structures d'assistance pour les enfants et qu'il a également décidé de maintenir les programmes d'enseignement religieux dans les écoles secondaires. En effet, les jeunes générations doivent bénéficier d'une formation solide pour se préparer à assumer leurs responsabilités dans la société de demain. Elles ont particulièrement besoin d'être motivées par des idéaux forts de liberté, de respect et de justice entre les personnes et les peuples, et de dignité pour tous, qui sont aussi les idéaux de la religion. En ayant une claire conscience des valeurs qui fondent leur histoire et leur culture, et en y puisant de nouveaux dynamismes, les jeunes pourront se tourner avec plus de confiance vers l'avenir et s'employer à le construire avec générosité et grandeur d'âme. Ils trouveront alors un sens véritablement altruiste à leur vie, bien plus épanouissant pour eux que la satisfaction immédiate de besoins matériels dans laquelle voudraient les enfermer une logique purement mercantile et une vision hédoniste de la destinée humaine. De même, pour les aider dans leur développement intégral, une telle formation favorisera leur vie intérieure et formera leur conscience, en vue de réaliser des choix conformes à la dignité des personnes.

5. L'Église, qui ne cherche aucun avantage pour elle-même, a aussi pour mission de rappeler à nos sociétés l'invitation puissante de l'idéal évangélique. C'est pourquoi elle défend avec tant de conviction la valeur inaliénable de la vie humaine, de sa conception jusqu'à sa fin naturelle, ainsi que la grandeur du mariage entre l'homme et la femme comme base de la famille et de la société. C'est à ce titre qu'elle se permet d'intervenir dans les débats de société pour rappeler ce qui sert la noblesse de la dignité humaine et ce qui la blesse, parfois gravement, et pour inviter les gouvernements à mesurer l'importance des choix économiques, politiques et éthiques qu'ils engagent, afin de bâtir une société toujours plus humaine.

6. Par votre intermédiaire, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, je suis heureux de saluer Mgr Fernand Franck, Archevêque de Luxembourg, les prêtres, les diacres et tous les fidèles qui forment la communauté catholique du Grand Duché. Je sais qu'ils prennent avec cœur une part active à la vie du pays, s'efforçant de donner aux communautés chrétiennes un visage accueillant à tous et d'abord aux plus petits.

7. Au moment où vous inaugurez votre noble mission auprès du Saint-Siège, je vous offre, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, mes vœux cordiaux. Soyez assuré de toujours trouver auprès de mes collaborateurs un accueil courtois et une aide bienveillante.

Sur Votre Excellence, sur sa famille et sur tous ses collaborateurs, ainsi que sur le peuple luxembourgeois, j'invoque de grand cœur l'abondance des Bénédiction divines.

S.E. il Signor Georges Santer
Ambasciatore di Lussemburgo presso la Santa Sede

È nato il 6 dicembre 1952.

È sposato ed ha due figli.

Laureato in Filosofia, ha frequentato l'Accademia Diplomatica di Vienna.

Nel 1980 è entrato in carriera diplomatica, ricoprendo i seguenti incarichi: Funzionario del Ministero degli Esteri, in missione a Madrid per le riunioni dell'Organizzazione per la Sicurezza e la Cooperazione in Europa, O.S.C.E., (1980-1983); Rappresentante Permanente aggiunto presso l'Organizzazione per la Cooperazione e lo Sviluppo Economico (O.C.D.E.) a Parigi (1983-1988); Incaricato d'Affari a.i. dell'Ambasciata a Madrid (1988); Direttore di Dipartimento presso il Ministero degli Esteri (1989-1991); Ambasciatore in Cina (1991-1994); Ambasciatore in Austria (1995-2002) e contemporaneamente Rappresentante Permanente presso gli Uffici delle Nazioni Unite a Vienna e l'O.S.C.E. (1995-2000).

Dal 2002 è Segretario Generale del Ministero degli Affari Esteri del Lussemburgo, ove risiede.

Parla il francese, il tedesco, l'inglese, l'italiano, l'olandese e lo spagnolo.

[01988-03.01] [Texte original: Français]

• DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DEL KENYA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. LA SIGNORA RAYCHELLE AWUOR OMAMO

Your Excellency,

It is a pleasure for me to extend a cordial welcome to you today as I accept the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Kenya to the Holy See. Though my pastoral visits to your country took place some years ago now, they remain clearly etched in my mind as events of great joy. I thank you for the greetings which you bear from President Kibaki, the Government and all the citizens of Kenya. Please convey to them my sincere best wishes and assure them of my prayers for the well-being of the nation.

On arrival at Nairobi in 1995, I observed that your nation and indeed the whole continent of Africa was at a crossroads (cf. *Arrival Speech*, Nairobi, 18 September 1995). Its peoples and their leaders were being called to exercise all their wisdom in the difficult and urgent task of promoting democratic government and prudent economic development as essential elements to the building of a just society. The "winds of change" driving that common desire have not abated; indeed they have gathered strength with people demanding ever more insistently concrete action to ensure the development of a civic life marked by respect, fairness and integrity (cf. *Ecclesia in Africa*, 44).

Kenya, it can now be said, has set out along the road of truth and peace. Against the often disturbing backdrop of human tragedies which continue to afflict the continent of Africa and other regions, your nation has taken a leading role in promoting peace initiatives and social stability. In this regard, the recent United Nations Security Council's sitting in your capital has given Kenya much positive attention in the international media and rightly has brought praise for the nation's considerable contribution to peace-keeping missions and projects, especially in Sudan and Somalia. Such generous undertakings, as well as bringing immediate relief to the long-suffering peoples directly affected by conflict, will also elicit in your neighbouring countries a deeper sense of shared responsibility for the defence and promotion of the fundamental human rights of the peoples of your region. When there is hesitation in the international community about the obligation to respect and implement human rights (cf. *Message for the 2003 World Day of Peace*, 5), misery ensues as is so evident today in Darfur.

In addition to a country's willing participation in the accords and agreements that promote international relations,

authentic development also requires adherence to a sound plan of genuine national progress. In fact, the "unbreakable bond between the work of peace and respect for truth" (*ibid.*, 8) suggests that the success of a government's participation in peace processes abroad will depend largely upon the degree of honesty and integrity with which it governs at home. In this regard, President Kibaki's determination to root out the scourge of corruption, which crushes the spirit of a nation, is to be applauded, and demands the active support of all politicians, civic leaders and bureaucrats in order that the common good may flourish. While much remains to be achieved, successes already attained in Kenya clearly give hope. Further strenuous efforts to guarantee an impartial judiciary and to ensure security through the rule of law and order are needed and will do much to favour a spirit of optimism among your people and to attract the kind of investment necessary to create the opportunities of employment which offer a brighter future to all and especially the young.

The family stands at the heart of the cultures of Africa. This is a treasure which must be preserved and never neglected, for the future of your people, and that of the world, passes through the family (cf. *Familiaris Consortio*, 86). It is only right therefore that civic and religious leaders should work together to ensure that the sacred institution of marriage, with its concomitant of stable home life, is affirmed and supported. Breakdown of domestic life is always a source of intractable problems which, in addition to causing incalculable distress to individuals, undermine the very fabric of society and its means of secure development.

The peoples of Kenya, though remaining confident about the future, are nevertheless suffering several acute social problems. Solutions cannot be restricted to the mere removal of hardships but instead require the courage to embrace a way of life faithful to God's plan for all men and women. In this regard, I note with grave concern the measures currently under debate in your country to facilitate abortion. In addition to violating life's essential dignity, abortion invariably causes untold emotional and psychological pain to the mother, who herself is frequently a victim of circumstances contrary to her deepest hopes and desires. Similarly, in regard to the tragedy of AIDS which the whole human family is currently facing, it must be recalled that at heart this is a question of behaviour. Proposed remedies which either ignore or reject the only genuine foundation of health and happiness in this matter – sexual fidelity within marriage and abstinence without – are likely to increase rather than resolve the tragedy and indeed can be understood as new forms of colonialism. I therefore appeal to the Christian community of Kenya to bear steadfast witness to that intimate communion of life and love which defines the family, brings joy to communities, and provides the foundation upon which the aspirations of a nation can be built.

For her part the Catholic Church in Kenya will continue to support families in all possible ways, working as an ally in the pursuit of peace, stability and prosperity. Through her numerous schools, health-care facilities, and community development programmes, she is already contributing much to securing a better future for the country. In this service the Church desires neither power nor privilege, but only the freedom to express her faith and love in works of goodness, justice and peace.

Your Excellency, as you enter the diplomatic community accredited to the Holy See, I assure you of the ready assistance of the various offices of the Roman Curia. May your mission serve to deepen the already strong bonds of understanding and cooperation between Kenya and the Holy See. Upon you, your family and your fellow citizens I cordially invoke the abundant blessings of Almighty God.

S.E. la Sig.ra Raychelle Awuor Omamo
Ambasciatore del Kenya presso la Santa Sede

È nata il 18 luglio 1962.

Laureata in Legge (University of Kent, Canterbury, 1983), specializzata in Diritto civile e commerciale (Kenya School of Law, 1984), ha conseguito il titolo di Avvocato patrocinante presso la Corte Suprema (1985).

Ha svolto la professione forense fino al 2003, ricoprendo inoltre i seguenti incarichi: Membro del Consiglio dell'Associazione dei Giuristi del Kenya (1996-1999); Presidente del Consiglio Direttivo della Casa di accoglienza per bambini sieropositivi "Nyumbani" a Nairobi (1999-2001); Primo Presidente-Donna

dell'Associazione dei Giuristi del Kenya (2001-2003);

Vice-Presidente dell'Associazione dei Giuristi dell'Africa Orientale (2002-2003).

Dal dicembre 2003 è anche Ambasciatore in Francia, ove risiede.

È consulente dell'UNICEF per progetti di legge in favore dei bambini.

Parla lo swahili e l'inglese.

[01990-02.01] [Original text: English]

• DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DI NORVEGIA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. IL SIGNOR LARS PETTER FORBERG

Your Excellency,

I am pleased to welcome you today and to accept the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of Norway to the Holy See. Though my visit to your country took place some years ago, I fondly recall the warmth and hospitality with which I was received. I thank you for the gracious greetings which you bring from His Majesty King Harald V and from Prime Minister Bondevik. I would ask you to convey to the Royal Family, the Government and all the people of Norway my good wishes and the assurance of my prayers for the well-being of the nation.

At the heart of the Holy See's diplomatic activity stands a steadfast commitment to defending the dignity of the human person. This promotion of human rights, social justice and solidarity, arises out of the recognition of the common origin of all life and points to the common destiny of all men and women. In this broad perspective, humanity's transcendent dimension is brought to light, countering the social fragmentation and secularism so sadly prevalent in many societies today and providing a sure foundation for solidarity and harmony in our world.

Within the international community Norway has long been esteemed for its generosity to developing nations. Tangible expressions of this are found, for example, in Norwegian participation in peace-keeping operations, assistance with aid projects, readiness to combat arms trafficking as well as championing of the causes of sustainable development and environmental protection. These acts of solidarity are an expression of a persevering desire to promote the common good and, at their most significant level, help to elicit a recognition of the essential nature of human life as a gift and of our world as a family of persons. In fact, genuine acts of solidarity are more than just unilateral gestures of good intent. They uphold God's universal plan for humanity and, in accord with this vision, address the complex challenges of justice, freedom of peoples and peace.

Mr Ambassador, as you have correctly noted, Christianity has been of fundamental importance in Norway's history. It must be likewise in the present and in the future. In my pastoral visit to your country, I came as a pilgrim wishing to honour the lives of Saint Olav and the other great Saints of the North, whose example still speaks today about the profound truths and values which have shaped Norwegian culture for over a thousand years. These guiding principles retain their significance for contemporary society, since they reveal "man's deepest sphere" and give "meaning to his life in the world" (cf. *Redemptor Hominis*, 10). Indeed, as seen in extraordinary ways through the witness of the Saints, the values at the heart of Christian Europe call all men and women "to direct their steps towards a truth which transcends them" (*Fides et Ratio*, 5) so that good may prevail and God may be honoured. When individuals lose sight of this goal, which is their only guarantee of freedom and happiness, they become entrapped by impoverished ideologies and then fail to lift their gaze to the heights of life's purpose.

In this regard, one cannot but notice that an eclipse of the sense of God has cast its shadow not only over your own country but over other Nordic lands as well. In this disquieting process of secularization, as I have noted on many occasions, it is marriage and the family which come under greatest threat. For this reason I continue to

urge both religious and civil leaders to uphold the sacred institution of marriage, willed by God in the very act of creation, with its concomitant of stable domestic life. The truth of human sexuality is illustrated in the beauty of married couples' love as a unique and exclusive gift of self to the other and the mutual acceptance of that wonderful gift by which they become cooperators with God in giving life to a new human person (cf. *Familiaris Consortio*, 14). Secular and pragmatic distortions of the reality of marriage can never be equated with the splendour of a life-long covenant based on generous self-giving and unconditional love and they will only damage the foundation upon which the legitimate aspirations of a nation are built.

From the beginning of my Pontificate I have made commitment to ecumenism a priority of my pastoral concern and action. Awareness of the common history shared by Christians has fostered brotherhood and dialogue, and united Christian witness for the advancement of the kingdom of God in our midst (cf. *Ut Unum Sint*, 41). To this end I encourage all the religious leaders of your nation to persevere along the path towards Christian unity. In this way they will help all Norwegians to draw on their rich heritage of over a thousand years of Christian faith: in Christ all people – nationals, migrants or foreigners – are brothers and sisters, and our gestures of solidarity towards them become acts of love and fidelity to Christ, who came that we might all have life and have it abundantly (cf. *Jn* 10:10).

With these words of encouragement I assure you that the Catholic Church will continue to work for the spiritual enrichment and social development of the Norwegian people. Through her witness of charity the Church reaches out to all men and women, irrespective of ethnicity or religion, facilitating the growth of a "culture of solidarity" and restoring life to the universal values of human coexistence (cf. *Ecclesia in Europa*, 85).

Mr Ambassador, I am confident that the mission which you begin today will help to strengthen the cordial bonds of understanding and cooperation between Norway and the Holy See. As you take up your new responsibilities be assured that the various offices of the Roman Curia are ready to assist you in the fulfilment of your duties. Upon you, your family and your fellow citizens I invoke the abundant blessings of Almighty God.

S.E. il Signor Lars Petter Forberg
Ambasciatore di Norvegia presso la Santa Sede

È nato il 16 aprile 1947.

È sposato ed ha due figli.

Ha completato i corsi dell'Accademia aeronautica norvegese (1967-1971), ricoprendo in seguito incarichi di Ufficiale superiore.

Ha svolto inoltre le seguenti mansioni: Aiutante di campo del Principe ereditario (1979-1982); Segretario del Principe ereditario (1983-1990); Aiutante principale di campo e Capo dello staff del Principe ereditario (1990-1991); Maresciallo di Corte a Oslo (1991-1996); Gran Ciambellano e Capo della Casa Reale (1996-2004).

Attualmente è anche Ambasciatore in Svizzera, ove risiede.

[01989-02.01] [Original text: English]
