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## **Audience with the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See for the exchange of wishes for the New Year**

At 10.30 this morning, in the Sala Regia of the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the members of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See for the exchange of wishes for the New Year.

After the introductory greeting of the dean of the Diplomatic Corps, H.E. Mr. George Poulides, ambassador of Cyprus to the Holy See, the Pope gave the following address:

### **Address of the Holy Father**

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The beginning of a new year allows us to interrupt for a few moments the frenetic pace of our daily activities in order to review the events of past months and to reflect on the challenges facing us in the near future. I thank you for your numerous presence at this annual gathering, which provides a welcome opportunity for us to exchange cordial greetings and good wishes with one another. Through you, I would like to convey to the peoples whom you represent my closeness and my prayerful hope that the year just begun will bring peace and well-being to each member of the human family.

I am most grateful to the Ambassador of Cyprus, His Excellency Mr George Poulides, for the gracious words of greeting he addressed to me in your name for the first time as Dean of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See. To each of you I would like to express my especial appreciation for your daily efforts to consolidate relations between your respective Countries and Organizations and the Holy See, all the more so through the signing or ratification of new accords.

I think in particular of the ratification of the *Framework Agreement between the Holy See and the Republic of Benin relating to the Legal Status of the Catholic Church in Benin*, and the signing and ratification of the *Agreement between the Holy See and the Republic of San Marino regarding the Teaching of Catholic Religion in Public Schools*.

In the multilateral sphere, the Holy See has also ratified the *UNESCO Asia-Pacific Regional Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education*. Last March it adhered to the *Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe*, an initiative aimed at showing how culture can be at the service of peace and a means of unification between different European societies, thus fostering concord among peoples. This is a token of particular esteem for an Organization that this year celebrates the seventieth anniversary of its foundation. The Holy See has cooperated with the Council of Europe for many decades and recognizes its specific role in the promotion of human rights, democracy and legality in an area that would embrace Europe as a whole. Finally, on 30 November last, the Vatican City State was admitted to the Single Euro Payments Area (SEPA).

Fidelity to the spiritual mission based on the command that the Lord Jesus gave to the Apostle Peter, “Feed my lambs” (*Jn 21:15*), impels the Pope – and consequently the Holy See – to show concern for the whole human family and its needs, including those of the material and social order. Nonetheless, the Holy See has no intention of interfering in the life of States; it seeks instead to be an attentive listener, sensitive to issues involving humanity, out of a sincere and humble desire to be at the service of every man and woman.

That concern is evident in our gathering today and inspires my encounters with the many pilgrims who visit the Vatican from throughout the world, as well as with the peoples and communities that I had the pleasure of visiting this past year during my Apostolic Journeys to Chile, Peru, Switzerland, Ireland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.

That same concern leads the Church everywhere to work for the growth of peaceful and reconciled societies. Here I think in particular of beloved Nicaragua, whose situation I follow closely in prayerful hope that the various political and social groups may find in dialogue the royal road to an exchange beneficial to the entire nation.

This has also been the context for the consolidation of relations between the Holy See and Vietnam, with a view to the appointment, in the near future, of a resident Papal Representative, whose presence would serve above all as a sign of the solicitude of the Successor of Peter for that local Church.

So too with the signing of the *Provisional Agreement between the Holy See and the People’s Republic of China on the Appointment of Bishops in China*, which took place on 22 September last. As you know, that Agreement is the result of a lengthy and thoughtful institutional dialogue that led to the determination of certain stable elements of cooperation between the Apostolic See and the civil authorities. As I noted in my Message to the Catholics of China and to the universal Church,[1] I had already readmitted to full ecclesial communion the remaining official bishops ordained without pontifical mandate, and urged them to work generously for the reconciliation of Chinese Catholics and for a renewed effort of evangelization. I thank the Lord because, for the first time after so many years, all the bishops in China are in full communion with the Successor of Peter and with the universal Church. And a visible sign of this was the participation of two bishops from Continental China in the recent Synod on young people. It is to be hoped that further contacts regarding the application of the signed Provisional Agreement will help resolve questions that remain open and make needed room for an effective enjoyment of religious freedom.

Dear Ambassadors,

The year just begun contains a number of significant anniversaries, in addition to that of the Council of Europe, which I mentioned above. Among these, I would like to bring up one in particular: the hundredth anniversary of the League of Nations, established by the Treaty of Versailles, signed on 28 June 1919. Why do I mention an

organization that today no longer exists? Because it represents the beginning of modern multilateral diplomacy, whereby states attempt to distance their reciprocal relations from the mentality of domination that leads to war. The experiment of the League of Nations quickly met with those well-known difficulties that exactly twenty years after its birth led to a new and more devastating conflict, the Second World War. Nevertheless, that experiment paved the way for the establishment in 1945 of the United Nations Organization. Certainly, that way remains full of difficulties and obstacles, nor is it always effective, since conflicts persist even today, yet it cannot be denied that it provides an opportunity for nations to meet and seek common solutions.

An indispensable condition for the success of multilateral diplomacy is the good will and good faith of the parties, their readiness to deal with one another fairly and honestly, and their openness to accepting the inevitable compromises arising from disputes. Whenever even one of these elements is missing, the result is a search for unilateral solutions and, in the end, the domination of the powerful over the weak. The League of Nations failed for these very reasons, and one notes with regret that the same attitudes are presently threatening the stability of the major international organizations.

To my mind, it is important that today too there should be no lessening of the desire for serene and constructive discussions between states. It is clear, though, that relationships within the international community, and the multilateral system as a whole, are experiencing a period of difficulty, with the resurgence of nationalistic tendencies at odds with the vocation of the international Organizations to be a setting for dialogue and encounter for all countries. This is partly due to a certain inability of the multilateral system to offer effective solutions to a number of long unresolved situations, like certain protracted conflicts, or to confront present challenges in a way satisfactory to all. It is also in part the result of the development of national policies determined more by the search for a quick partisan consensus than by the patient pursuit of the common good by providing long-term answers. It is likewise partially the outcome of the growing influence within the international Organizations of powers and interest groups that impose their own visions and ideas, sparking new forms of ideological colonization, often in disregard for the identity, dignity and sensitivities of peoples. In part too, it is a consequence of the reaction in some parts of the world to a globalization that has in some respects developed in too rapid and disorderly a manner, resulting in a tension between globalization and local realities. The global dimension has to be considered without ever losing sight of the local. As a reaction to a "spherical" notion of globalization, one that levels differences and smoothes out particularities, it is easy for forms of nationalism to re-emerge. Yet globalization can prove promising to the extent that it can be "polyhedric", favouring a positive interplay between the identity of individual peoples and countries and globalization itself, in accordance with the principle that the whole is greater than the part.[2]

Some of these attitudes go back to the period between the two World Wars, when populist and nationalist demands proved more forceful than the activity of the League of Nations. The reappearance of these impulses today is progressively weakening the multilateral system, resulting in a general lack of trust, a crisis of credibility in international political life, and a gradual marginalization of the most vulnerable members of the family of nations.

In his memorable Address to the United Nations – the first time a Pope addressed that Assembly – Saint Paul VI, whom I had the joy of canonizing this past year, spoke of the purpose of multilateral diplomacy, its characteristics and its responsibilities in the contemporary context, but also of its points of contact with the spiritual mission of the Pope and thus of the Holy See.

### *The primacy of justice and law*

The first point of contact that I would mention is the primacy of justice and law. As Pope Paul told the Assembly: "You sanction the great principle that relationships between nations must be regulated by reason, justice, law, by negotiation, not by force, nor by violence, force, war, nor indeed by fear and deceit".[3]

At present it is troubling to see the re-emergence of tendencies to impose and pursue individual national

interests without having recourse to the instruments provided by international law for resolving controversies and ensuring that justice is respected, also through international Courts. Such an attitude is at times the result of a reaction on the part of government leaders to growing unease among the citizens of not a few countries, who perceive the procedures and rules governing the international community as slow, abstract and ultimately far removed from their own real needs. It is fitting that political leaders listen to the voices of their constituencies and seek concrete solutions to promote their greater good. Yet this demands respect for law and justice both within their national communities and within the international community, since reactive, emotional and hasty solutions may well be able to garner short-term consensus, but they will certainly not help the solution of deeper problems; indeed, they will aggravate them.

In light of this concern, I chose to devote my Message for this year's World Day of Peace, celebrated on 1 January, to the theme: *Good Politics at the Service of Peace*. There is a close relationship between good politics and the peaceful coexistence of peoples and nations. Peace is never a partial good, but one that embraces the entire human race. Hence an essential aspect of good politics is the pursuit of the common good of all, insofar as it is "the good of all people and of the whole person"[4] and a condition of society that enables all individuals and the community as a whole to achieve their proper material and spiritual well-being.

Politics must be farsighted and not limited to seeking short-term solutions. A good politician should not occupy spaces but initiate processes; he or she is called to make unity prevail over conflict, based on "solidarity in its deepest and most challenging sense". Politics thus becomes "a way of making history in a life setting where conflicts, divisions and oppositions can achieve a diversified and life-giving unity".[5]

Such an approach takes account of the transcendent dimension of the human person, created in the image and likeness of God. Respect for the dignity of each human being is thus the indispensable premise for all truly peaceful coexistence, and law becomes the essential instrument for achieving social justice and nurturing fraternal bonds between peoples. In this context, a fundamental role is played by the human rights set forth in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, whose seventieth anniversary we recently celebrated. The universal objective and rational nature of those rights ought rightly to be reaffirmed, lest there prevail partial and subjective visions of humanity that risk leading to new forms of inequality, injustice, discrimination and, in extreme cases, also new forms of violence and oppression.

#### *The defence of those most vulnerable*

The second point of contact that I would mention is the defence of those who are vulnerable. In the words of Pope Paul: "We want to speak... for the poor, the disinherited, the unfortunate, and those who long for justice, a dignified life, liberty, prosperity and progress".[6]

The Church has always been committed to helping those in need, while the Holy See itself has in recent years promoted various projects aimed at assisting the most vulnerable, projects that have also been supported by different actors on the international level. Among these, I would mention the humanitarian initiative in Ukraine on behalf of those suffering, particularly in the eastern areas of the country, from the conflict that has now lasted for almost five years and has recently seen troubling developments in the Black Sea. Thanks to the active response of the Catholic Churches of Europe and of members of the faithful elsewhere to my appeal of May 2016, an effort has been made, in collaboration with other religious confessions and international Organizations, to respond concretely to the immediate needs of those living in the territories affected. They are in fact the first victims of the war. The Church and her various institutions will pursue this mission, also in the hope of drawing greater attention to other humanitarian questions, including that of the treatment of the numerous prisoners. Through her activities and her closeness to the people involved, the Church strives to encourage, directly and indirectly, peaceful paths to the solution of the conflict, paths that are respectful of justice and law, including international law, which is the basis of security and coexistence in the entire region. To this end, the instruments that guarantee the free exercise of religious rights remain important.

For its part, the international community and its agencies are called to give a voice to those who have none. Among the latter in our own time, I would mention the victims of other ongoing wars, especially that in Syria with its high death toll. Once more, I appeal to the international community to promote a political solution to a conflict that will ultimately see only a series of defeats. It is vital to put an end to violations of humanitarian law, which cause untold suffering to the civil population, especially women and children, and strike at essential structures such as hospitals, schools and refugee camps, as well as religious edifices.

Nor can we forget the many displaced persons resulting from the conflict; this has created great hardship for neighbouring countries. Once more, I express my gratitude to Jordan and Lebanon for receiving in a spirit of fraternity, and not without considerable sacrifice, great numbers of people. At the same time, I express my hope that the refugees will be able to return to their homelands in safe and dignified living conditions. My thoughts also go to the various European countries that have generously offered hospitality to those in difficulty and danger.

Among those affected by the instability that for years has marked the Middle East are especially the Christian communities that have dwelt in those lands from apostolic times, and down the centuries have contributed to their growth and development. It is extremely important that Christians have a place in the future of the region, and so I encourage all those who have sought refuge in other places to do everything possible to return to their homes and in any event to maintain and strengthen their ties to their communities of origin. At the same time, I express my hope that political authorities will not fail to ensure their security and all else needed for them to continue to dwell in the countries of which they are full citizens, and to contribute to their growth.

Sadly, in these years Syria and more generally the whole Middle East have become a battleground for many conflicting interests. In addition to those of a chiefly political and military nature, we should not overlook attempts to foment hostility between Muslims and Christians. Even though “over the centuries many quarrels and dissensions have arisen between Christians and Muslims”,<sup>[7]</sup> in different areas of the Middle East they have long lived together in peace. In the near future, I will have occasion to visit two predominantly Muslim countries, Morocco and the United Arab Emirates. These represent two important opportunities to advance interreligious dialogue and mutual understanding between the followers of both religions, in this year that marks the eight-hundredth anniversary of the historic meeting between Saint Francis of Assisi and Sultan al-Malik al-Kāmil.

Among the vulnerable of our time that the international community is called to defend are not only refugees but also migrants. Once again, I appeal to governments to provide assistance to all those forced to emigrate on account of the scourge of poverty and various forms of violence and persecution, as well as natural catastrophes and climatic disturbances, and to facilitate measures aimed at permitting their social integration in the receiving countries. Efforts also need to be made to prevent individuals from being constrained to abandon their families and countries, and to allow them to return safely and with full respect for their dignity and human rights. All human beings long for a better and more prosperous life, and the challenge of migration cannot be met with a mindset of violence and indifference, nor by offering merely partial solutions.

Consequently, I cannot fail to express my appreciation for the efforts of all those governments and institutions that, moved by a generous sense of solidarity and Christian charity, cooperate in a spirit of fraternity for the benefit of migrants. Among these, I would like to mention Colombia which, together with other countries of the continent, has welcomed in recent months a vast influx of people coming from Venezuela. At the same time, I realize that the waves of migration in recent years have caused diffidence and concern among people in many countries, particularly in Europe and North America, and this has led various governments to severely restrict the number of new entries, even of those in transit. Nonetheless, I do not believe that partial solutions can exist for so universal an issue. Recent events have shown the need for a common, concerted response by all countries, without exception and with respect for every legitimate aspiration, whether of states or of migrants and refugees themselves.

In this regard, the Holy See has actively participated in the negotiations and supported the adoption of the two *Global Compacts on Refugees* and on *Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration*. In particular, the migration Compact represents an important step forward for the international community, which now, in the context of the United

Nations is for the first time dealing on a multilateral level with this theme in a document of such importance. Despite the fact that they are not legally binding, and that some governments were absent from the recent United Nations Conference in Marrakesh, these two Compacts will serve as important points of reference for political commitment and concrete action on the part of international organizations, legislators and politicians, as well as all those working for a more responsible, coordinated and safe management of situations involving refugees and migrants of various kinds. In the case of both Compacts, the Holy See appreciates their intention and their character, which facilitates their implementation; at the same time, it has expressed reservations regarding the documents appealed to by the Compact on migration that contain terminology and guidelines inconsistent with its own principles on life and on the rights of persons.

Among others who are vulnerable, Paul VI went on to say that: “We speak for... the younger generation of today, who are moving ahead trustfully, with every right to expect a better mankind”.<sup>[8]</sup> Young people, who often feel bewildered and uncertain about the future, were the subject of the fifteenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. They will also be at the forefront of the Apostolic Journey that I will make to Panama in a few days for the thirty-fourth World Youth Day. Young people are our future, and the task of politics is to pave the way for the future. For this reason, it is urgently necessary to invest in initiatives that can enable coming generations to shape their future, with the possibility of finding employment, forming a family and raising children.

Together with young people, particular attention needs to be paid to children, especially in this year that marks the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. This is a good occasion for serious reflection on the steps taken to protect the welfare of our little ones and their social and intellectual development, as well as their physical, psychological and spiritual growth. Here I cannot refrain from speaking of one of the plagues of our time, which sadly has also involved some members of the clergy. The abuse of minors is one of the vilest and most heinous crimes conceivable. Such abuse inexorably sweeps away the best of what human life holds out for innocent children, and causes irreparable and lifelong damage. The Holy See and the Church as a whole are working to combat and prevent these crimes and their concealment, in order to ascertain the truth of the facts involving ecclesiastics and to render justice to minors who have suffered sexual violence aggravated by the abuse of power and conscience. My meeting with the episcopates of the entire world next February is meant to be a further step in the Church’s efforts to shed full light on the facts and to alleviate the wounds caused by such crimes.

It is painful to note that in our societies, so often marked by fragile family situations, we see an increase of violence also with regard to women, whose dignity was emphasized by the Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem*, published thirty years ago by Pope Saint John Paul II. Faced with the bane of physical and psychological abuse of women, there is an urgent need to recover correct and balanced forms of relationship, based on respect and mutual recognition, wherein each person can express in an authentic way his or her own identity. At the same time, the promotion of certain forms of non-differentiation between the genders risks distorting the very essence of manhood and womanhood.

Concern for those who are most vulnerable impels us also to reflect on another serious problem of our time, namely the condition of workers. Unless adequately protected, work ceases to be a means of human self-realization and becomes a modern form of slavery. A hundred years ago saw the establishment of the International Labour Organization, which has sought to promote suitable working conditions and to increase the dignity of workers themselves. Faced with the challenges of our own time, first of all increased technological growth, which eliminates jobs, and the weakening of economic and social guarantees for workers, I express my hope that the International Labour Organization will continue to be, beyond partisan interests, an example of dialogue and concerted effort to achieve its lofty objectives. In this mission, it too is called, together with other agencies of the international community, to confront the evil of child labour and new forms of slavery, as well as a progressive decrease in the value of wages, especially in developed countries, and continued discrimination against women in the workplace.

*To be a bridge between peoples and builders of peace*

In his address before the United Nations, Saint Paul VI clearly indicated the primary goal of that international Organization. In his words: “You are working to unite nations, to associate states... to bring them together. You are a bridge between peoples... It is enough to recall that the blood of millions, countless unheard-of sufferings, useless massacres and frightening ruins have sanctioned the agreement that unites you with an oath that ought to change the future history of the world: never again war! Never again war! It is peace, peace, that has to guide the destiny of the nations of all mankind! [And] as you well know, peace is not built merely by means of politics and a balance of power and interests. It is built with the mind, with ideas, with works of peace”.<sup>[9]</sup>

In the course of the past year, there have been some significant signs of peace, starting with the historic agreement between Ethiopia and Eritrea, which puts an end to twenty years of conflict and restores diplomatic relations between the two countries. Also, the agreement signed by the leaders of South Sudan, enabling the resumption of civil coexistence and the renewed functioning of national institutions, represents a sign of hope for the African continent, where grave tensions and widespread poverty persist. I follow with special concern the developing situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and I express my hope that the country can regain the reconciliation it has long awaited and undertake a decisive journey towards development, thus ending the ongoing state of insecurity affecting millions of people, including so many children. To that end, respect for the result of the electoral process is a determining factor for a sustainable peace. I likewise express my closeness to all those suffering from fundamentalist violence, especially in Mali, Niger and Nigeria, and from continued internal tensions in Cameroon, which not rarely sow death even among civilians.

Overall, we should note that Africa, beyond such dramatic situations, also shows great positive potential, grounded in its ancient culture and its traditional spirit of hospitality. An example of practical solidarity between nations is seen in the opening of their frontiers by different countries, in order generously to receive refugees and displaced persons. Appreciation should be shown for the fact that in many states we see the growth of peaceful coexistence between the followers of different religions and the promotion of joint initiatives of solidarity. In addition, the implementation of inclusive policies and the progress of democratic processes are proving effective in many regions for combating absolute poverty and promoting social justice. As a result, the support of the international community becomes all the more urgent for favouring the development of infrastructures, the growth of prospects for future generations, and the emancipation of the most vulnerable sectors of society.

Positive signs are arriving from the Korean Peninsula. The Holy See regards favourably the dialogues in course and expresses the hope that they can also deal with the more complex issues in a constructive attitude and thus lead to shared and lasting solutions capable of ensuring a future of development and cooperation for the whole Korean people and for the entire region.

I express a similar hope for beloved Venezuela, that peaceful institutional means can be found to provide solutions to the political, social and economic crisis, means that can make it possible to help all those suffering from the tensions of recent years, and to offer all the Venezuelan people a horizon of hope and peace.

The Holy See expresses the hope too that dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians will resume, so that an agreement at last can be reached and a response given to the legitimate aspirations of both peoples by ensuring the coexistence of two states and the attainment of a long awaited and desired peace. A united commitment on the part of the international community is extremely important and necessary for attaining this goal, as also for promoting peace in the entire region, particularly in Yemen and Iraq, while at the same time ensuring that necessary humanitarian assistance is provided to all those in need.

*Rethinking our common destiny*

Finally, I would mention a fourth feature of multilateral diplomacy: it invites us to rethink our common destiny.

Paul VI put it in these terms: “We have to get used to a new way of thinking... about man’s community life and about the pathways of history and the destinies of the world... The hour has come... to think back over our common origin, our history, our common destiny. The appeal to the moral conscience of man has never been as necessary as it is today, in an age marked by such great human progress. For the danger comes neither from progress nor from science... The real danger comes from man, who has at his disposal ever more powerful instruments that are as well fitted to bring about ruin as they are to achieve lofty conquests”.[10]

In the context of that time, the Pope was referring essentially to the proliferation of nuclear weapons. “Arms, especially the terrible arms that modern science has provided you, engender bad dreams, feed evil sentiments, create nightmares, hostilities and dark resolutions, even before they cause any victims and ruins. They call for enormous expenses. They interrupt projects of solidarity and of useful labour. They warp the outlook of nations”.[11]

It is painful to note that not only does the arms trade seem unstoppable, but that there is in fact a widespread and growing resort to arms, on the part both of individuals and states. Of particular concern is the fact that nuclear disarmament, generally called for and partially pursued in recent decades is now yielding to the search for new and increasingly sophisticated and destructive weapons. Here I want to reiterate firmly that “we cannot fail to be genuinely concerned by the catastrophic humanitarian and environmental effects of any employment of nuclear devices. If we also take into account the risk of an accidental detonation as a result of error of any kind, the threat of their use – I would say the immorality of their use – as well as their very possession, is to be firmly condemned. For they exist in the service of a mentality of fear that affects not only the parties in conflict but the entire human race. International relations cannot be held captive to military force, mutual intimidation, and the parading of stockpiles of arms. Weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, create nothing but a false sense of security. They cannot constitute the basis for peaceful coexistence between members of the human family, which must rather be inspired by an ethics of solidarity”.[12]

Rethinking our common destiny in the present context also involves rethinking our relationship with our planet. This year too, immense distress and suffering caused by heavy rains, flooding, fires, earthquakes and drought have struck the inhabitants of different regions of the Americas and Southeast Asia. Hence, among the issues urgently calling for an agreement within the international community are care for the environment and climate change. In this regard, also in the light of the consensus reached at the recent international Conference on Climate Change (COP24) held in Katowice, I express my hope for a more decisive commitment on the part of states to strengthening cooperation for urgently combating the worrisome phenomenon of global warming. The earth belongs to everyone, and the consequences of its exploitation affect all the peoples of the world, even if certain regions feel those consequences more dramatically. Among the latter is the Amazon region, which will be at the centre of the forthcoming Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops to be held in the Vatican next October. While chiefly discussing paths of evangelization for the people of God, it will certainly deal with environmental issues in the context of their social repercussions.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On 9 November 1989 the Berlin Wall fell. Within a few months, an end would come to the last legacy of the Second World War: the painful division of Europe decided at Yalta and the Cold War. The countries east of the Iron Curtain recovered freedom after decades of oppression, and many of them set out on the path that would lead to membership in the European Union. In the present climate, marked by new centrifugal tendencies and the temptation to erect new curtains, may Europe not lose its awareness of the benefits – the first of which is peace – ushered in by the journey of friendship and rapprochement between peoples begun in the postwar period.

Finally, I would like to mention yet another anniversary. On 11 February ninety years ago, the Vatican City State came into being as a result of the signing of the Lateran Pacts between the Holy See and Italy. This concluded the lengthy period of the “Roman Question” that followed the taking of Rome and the end of the Papal States.



With the Lateran Treaty, the Holy See was able to have at its use “that small portion of material territory indispensable for the exercise of the spiritual power entrusted to men for the sake of mankind”,<sup>[13]</sup> as Pius XI stated. With the Concordat, the Church was once more able to contribute fully to the spiritual and material growth of Rome and Italy as a whole, a country rich in history, art and culture, which Christianity had contributed to building. On this anniversary, I assure the Italian people of a special prayer, so that, in fidelity to their proper traditions, they may keep alive the spirit of fraternal solidarity that has long distinguished them.

To you, dear Ambassadors and distinguished guests here present, and to your countries, I offer cordial good wishes that the New Year will see a strengthening of the bonds of friendship uniting us and renewed efforts to promote that peace to which our world aspires.

Thank you!

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[1] Cf. *Message to the Catholics of China and to the Universal Church*, 26 September 2018, No. 3.

[2] Cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), 234.

[3] PAUL VI, *Address to the United Nations* (4 October 1965), 2.

[4] Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, No. 165.

[5] Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), 228.

[6] *Address to the United Nations*, 1.

[7] SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions *Nostra Aetate* (28 October 1965), 3.

[8] *Address to the United Nations*, 1.

[9] *Ibid.*, 3; 5.

[10] *Ibid.*, 7.

[11] *Ibid.*, 5.

[12] *Address to Participants in the International Symposium on Disarmament sponsored by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development*, 10 November 2017.

[13] PIUS XI, *Address “Il nostro più cordiale” to the Parish Priests of Rome and the Lenten Preachers on the occasion of the signing of the Treaty and Concordat in the Lateran Palace*, 1 February 1929.

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