

Address of the Holy Father
on the occasion of the Visit of the Honorable Gerald Ford
President of the United States
June 3, 1975

We deeply appreciated the desire you manifested to visit us, at the end of the rapid journey that has brought you for the first time to some of the countries of Europe. We are certain that this desire emphasizes the importance that you attribute to the moral aspects of the problems that have been the subject of the intense round of meetings which you have been having in these last few days with many of the leaders in whose hands is the destiny of large sections of the world, and particularly of Europe and the Middle East.

In these meetings you have been occupied in examining difficult questions, not only of political but also of military import, which, at least from the declared point of view of defense, cannot be ignored by those responsible for public life. You knew that from us you would hear only exhortations and words of peace and of sincere and generous collaboration for the advantage of all.

This is our mission. It constrains us to strive to ensure that people never forget the primacy of spiritual and moral values, which direct social living no less - indeed more - than economic and military interests and preoccupations.

We do not shut our eyes to the reality of relationships of power that almost inevitably arise between nations and their blocs, and which continually pose problems of balance and imbalance. But we must raise our voice to remind people that it is not upon power that a peaceful and humane international order can be based, but upon the criterion of justice, upon respect and understanding of the rights and needs of others, and upon a spirit of generous cooperation of the strongest with the weakest, for their mutual advantage.

Under this aspect we are glad to be able to give the support of our counsel and our humble collaboration to the solving of the knots that mean so much suffering and peril for peoples that are ever most dear to us, to the setting up of systems of international relationships that will better guarantee the exigencies of harmony and peace, in security and justice, and to an intensified exchange of services and goods between peoples and continents.

May this convince you, Mr. President, of the pleasure with which we have received your visit and of the interest with which we have availed ourselves of the conversation that we have been able to have with you, the Head of a nation upon which rest such tremendous responsibilities.

We commend to God the efforts of all men of good will and upon yourself, Mr. President, and upon the people whom you represent we invoke the blessings of the Lord.