Pope addresses the new ambassador of Hungary

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HUNGARY: MEDIATOR BETWEEN EAST AND WEST

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This morning in the Vatican, Benedict XVI received the Letters of Credence of Gabor Gyorivanyi, the new Hungarian ambassador to the Holy See.

Speaking to the diplomat in German, the Pope observed that, following the resumption of diplomatic relations between the Holy See and the Republic of Hungary in 1990, "new confidence emerged in active and constructive dialogue with the Catholic Church". He also spoke of his hope "that the profound wounds inflicted by the materialistic vision of man which seized the hearts of your country's citizens for nearly forty-five years, may continue to heal in a climate of peace, freedom and respect for man's dignity.

"Without doubt the Catholic faith is one of the fundamental pillars of Hungarian history", the Holy Father added. "When, long ago in the year 1000, the young Hungarian Prince Stephen received the regal crown sent to him by Pope Sylvester II, this gift included the mandate to give faith in Jesus Christ a space and a home in that land. ... Of course we do not expect the State to impose a particular religion; rather, it should guarantee the freedom to confess and practice the faith. Nonetheless, politics and Christian faith do meet. ... This does nor mean imposing norms or codes of behaviour upon people who do not share the faith. It means, quite simply, purifying reason with the aim of helping to ensure that what is good and just may be recognised and put into practice, here and now".

The Pope then went on to refer to the important role played by Hungary following the fall of the Iron Curtain, to its entry into the European Union six years ago, and to its forthcoming presidency of the Council of Europe. "Hungary", he said, "is particularly called to act as mediator between East and West. The Holy Crown, the legacy of King Stephen, by uniting the circular 'corona graeca' with the arched 'corona latina', ... shows how East and West must support and enrich one another on the basis of their spiritual and cultural heritage, and on the living profession of faith".

Speaking them of the project for a new Hungarian constitution, the Pope expressed the hope "that it will be inspired by Christian values, especially as concerns the position of marriage and the family within society, and the protection of life".

He went on: "Marriage and the family constitute an essential foundation for the healthy development of civil society, of countries and of peoples. ... Europe would not be Europe if this basic social building block disappeared or was substantially transformed. ... The Church cannot approve legislative initiatives which involve the acceptance of alternative models of marriage and family life, as these would contribute to weakening the principles of natural law and thus to relativising legislation and society's understanding of values".

Finally Benedict XVI highlighted how the Catholic Church, "like other religious communities, plays a significant role in Hungarian society ... through her institutions in the field of education, culture, and social assistance, in this way she makes a useful contribution to the moral edification of your country. ... May the collaboration between the State and the Catholic Church in this field grow in the future and bring benefit to everyone".