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“Pope Francis’ Diplomacy”

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Seton Hall University, South Orange, New Jersey

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Your Eminence the Archbishop of Newark, Joseph William Cardinal Tobin, Honorable President of Seton Hall University. Dr. Gabriel Esteban and Mrs. Esteban, Honorable Provost ad interim of Seton Hall University, Professor Karen Boroff, Distinguished Dean of the School of Diplomacy and International Relations, Professor Andrea Bartoli and Mrs. Bartoli, Dear Faculty members and Students of the School of Diplomacy, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased that my first act of Lenten penance is a talk at Seton Hall University!

Thank you, Eminence, for your presence, which, frankly, intimidates me. I can’t get out of my mind the New York Times picture of your benching two-and-a-quarter! For those uninitiated to gym parlance, that’s a hefty 225 pounds! I can hardly bench a quarter!

Thank you, Professor Bartoli, for giving me this opportunity to converse with the Seton Hall community about Pope Francis’ Diplomacy, a topic that goes right to the heart of the Catholic identity of Seton Hall.

Diplomacy in Continuity

In the history of the Church, we don’t talk of ruptures or new starts. We talk of continuity – as seamless as possible –, of a journey guided by perennial doctrine discerned in the context of a world in constant flux. We love the image of Saint Peter’s boat sailing resolutely forward although battered by gales and tossed about by the waves.

That’s the way I love to think of the diplomacy of the Holy See. Between Pope Francis and his predecessors, there have been no ruptures, but rather continuity. Holy See diplomacy is a ministry and task carried out in the secular world by the Church and in the name of the Church. Thus, like all Church ministries and actions, it is also bound by the principle of *salus animarum suprema lex* [“The salvation of souls is the supreme law of the Church”]. It can only fulfill this principle if it knows how to “scrutinize the signs of the time and interpret them in the light of the Gospel” (GS4), how to discern and act accordingly.

I believe this is particularly true within the context of the presence of the Holy See at the United Nations and other multilateral organizations. The overall goal of the Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations has always been this: to bring the leaven of the

Gospel and the Church's own bimillennial experience of humanity to the complex reality of international relations and to the international debates about the problems facing our world.

The Holy See's Presence at the United Nations

Many ask: Why should the Holy See want to be present at the United Nations? Isn't the UN "right now," as one President commented recently, "just a club for people to get together, talk and have a good time?" "So sad," he concluded.

Well, I am inclined to believe that getting together, talking and having a good time is not that sad! But, yes, at the UN it does become sad when, as the lyrics of the old Dan Fogelberg song would have it, speeches become "longer than there've been fishes in the ocean" and "there've been stars up in the heavens," and, worse, if they are not "stronger than any mountain cathedral," and worse still, if they are not "truer than any tree ever grew" or "deeper than any forest primeval." (Cf. "Longer" by Dan Fogelberg).

Nevertheless, why, indeed, is the Holy See present and actively engaged at the United Nations?

The United Nations, as you well know, was born out of the ashes of the Second World War in 1945. Fifty-one Member States signed the United Nations Charter in San Francisco in 1945.

It was not exactly love at first sight for the Holy See. When the United Nations was being founded, the Holy See was somewhat cautious about it. It recognized the urgent need for an international organization to succeed the failed League of Nations, but had some serious concerns. One concern was that the UN Charter, while recognizing the equality of States, did not in fact enshrine this principle, since the five permanent members of the Security Council, invested with veto-power, were patently unequal to the rest. Another was that it was not universal in membership, as many countries, especially small ones and those that gained independence against the will of their colonial masters, were excluded. Another was that it debated problems but didn't solve them. In 1953, Pope Pius XII wondered publicly: "Is the General Assembly merely an Academy to formulate Agreements that will never be put into practice?"

I am tempted to say, "So sad!"

Regardless, even though the Holy See was not a part of the UN in the early days, it often participated in the formal and informal work of the UN by invitation. Finally, on April 6, 1964, the Holy See became a Permanent Observer Mission to the United Nations and established our Mission in New York. This was fitting, not only because of the burgeoning involvement of the Holy See in UN deliberations, but above all because the four pillars of the UN as enshrined in its Charter dovetail very well with four main pillars of Catholic Social Teaching: the prevention of war and the promotion of peace; the protection and advance of human dignity and rights; human development; and helping nations to keep their word and honor international treaties and law.

The Thoughts of the Popes on the United Nations

During the 53 years of existence of the Holy See Permanent Observer Mission in New York, there have been five Papal visits to the United Nations: Blessed Paul VI in October 1965, Saint John Paul II in 1979 and 1995, Pope Benedict XVI in 2008, and Pope Francis in 2015. During these visits, the Popes expressed esteem for the institution, which they considered essential for the world.

Pope Paul VI told the members of the General Assembly that the purpose of his visit was to be “first of all, a moral and solemn ratification of this lofty institution. ... The edifice that you have constructed must never collapse; it must be continually perfected and adapted to the needs that the history of the world will present.”

John Paul II talked of areas of collaboration, saying, “Although their respective purposes and operative approaches are obviously different, the Church and the United Nations constantly find wide areas of cooperation on the basis of their common concern for the human family.”

Pope Benedict added, “My presence at this Assembly is a sign of esteem for the United Nations, and it is intended to express the hope that the Organization will increasingly serve as a sign of unity between States and an instrument of service to the entire human family.”

Pope Francis reiterated the appreciation expressed by his predecessors, “reaffirming,” he said, “the importance that the Catholic Church attaches to this Institution and the hope that she places in its activities.”

Moreover, for those of us who are Catholics, members of a Universal Church, the United Nations is a political resemblance of the “catholicity” of the Church. Blessed Paul VI stated it in such a poetic tone: “We would be tempted to say that your chief characteristic is a reflection, as it were, in the temporal field of what Our Catholic Church aspires to be in the spiritual field: unique and universal. Among the ideals by which mankind is guided, one can conceive of nothing greater on the natural level. Your vocation is to make brothers not only of some, but of all peoples. A difficult undertaking? Unquestionably; but this is the undertaking, your very noble undertaking.”

The Popes, however, have not given the United Nations a pass. While granting the “lofty institution” a “moral and solemn ratification,” the Popes also affirmed that there were times when the United Nations has been found wanting, unable to realize its vision by failing to achieve its objectives for some peoples in the world.

John Paul II declared, “The United Nations Organization needs to rise more and more above the cold status of an administrative institution and to become a moral center where all the nations of the world feel at home and develop a shared awareness of being, as it were, a ‘family of nations.’”

Pope Francis, reviewing the first seven decades of the institution, said, “The experience of these seventy years since the founding of the United Nations in general, and in particular the experience of these first fifteen years of the third millennium, reveal both the effectiveness of the full application of international norms and the ineffectiveness of their lack of enforcement.”

Holy See's Bilateral Diplomacy

Up to here, I have only referred to the diplomacy of the Holy See at the multilateral level, specifically at the UN. At the bilateral level, today the Holy See has diplomatic relations with 182 out of 193 countries in the world, and more are on the drawing board. We have 116 Apostolic Nunciatures and Permanent Missions across the globe, endowing the Holy See with one of the world's most extensive diplomatic networks.

And if we consider our bishops, priests, men and women religious, catechists and committed laypeople as our equivalent to operatives of the American CIA or the old Soviet KGB, nobody can beat us in information gathering and grassroots operations! Let me share a story. In one of my previous postings, the political officer of a very powerful country's Embassy proudly announced to me that her Ambassador was about to inaugurate an irrigation system that her Government had financed. I said to her, "Do you know that the dam and the irrigation system are being built on the property of the Speaker of the Parliament?" She was shocked! How was it possible, when her Embassy was staffed with more than a hundred people, and there were only a couple of us at the Nunciature, that I could have had better intelligence? She was unaware that there were dozens of noney Sisters in the villages where the project was being built! And not far away were Jesuit "social activists" running schools at the same time. When I next saw my very efficient "intelligence operatives," I had to thank them for their wonderful work!

Pope Francis' Diplomatic Priorities

Given the time constraints, I must now start the second part of my talk, namely, the priorities of Pope Francis' diplomacy that we in his service must concretize on the ground.

Before mentioning specific issues that we work to advance at the bilateral and multilateral levels, I would like first to highlight the theme of encounter and dialogue. It is the golden thread that ties together the words and actions of the Pope, the unifying inspiration that has overarching implications not only on the pastoral and spiritual activity of the Church, but also on the socio-economic and political concerns of our time.

Pope Francis especially relates the "culture of encounter" to solidarity and charity. When he speaks about social issues and about the questions with the biggest political implications, he constantly affirms a diplomacy of encounter leading toward better mutual knowledge and mutual respect. It's a diplomacy of dialogue to resolve conflicts, promote unity and fight exclusion. It's what he's called *caminar juntos* ["journeying together"] as a way of life. This is a diplomacy that privileges greater respect for the weaker countries, the rule of law over the law of force, honest and cordial relations among nations and peoples over mutual suspicions. A culture of encounter cannot happen building walls and promoting isolationism, but only through bridges and open doors.

I can cite dozens of reflections of Pope Francis on this, but, insofar as Seton Hall is a top university, I don't want to rob the students of the pleasure of doing research and working hard on their homework!

The issues on which the Pope proposes a diplomacy of dialogue, bridge-building and encounter are social issues with strong political implications. People ask: Why should the Church, why should the Pope care, about controversial social and political issues? The short answer is: Because Jesus cares! And if Jesus cares, the Pope and the Church cannot but care.

Many of us know by heart the celebrated opening passage of the Second Vatican Council's Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et spes*: "The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts."

With his repeated and strong, even occasionally provocative, words and actions on the great questions and challenges facing our world today, Pope Francis invites us to do the same, to make our own the joys and sorrows of the world, to get our hands dirty, to begin to smell like the sheep, to act like a field hospital in the midst of battle, to get involved in promoting and carrying out a diplomacy of dialogue and encounter.

This is the spirit that inspires our work at the United Nations and in bilateral relations across the world. It goes without saying that, at the same time, given the Holy See's and the Church's unique role and competence, there is the need to avoid identifying ourselves in any way along political or ideological lines, thereby safeguarding our unique identity and influence in the concert of Nations.

Priority Commitments of the Holy See's Mission to the UN Today

The Holy See's Permanent Observer Mission takes part in almost every debate at the UN and so we are involved in the whole gamut of issues facing the international community. But if you were to ask me to specify priority commitments we have in 2017 following the lead of Pope Francis, I'd offer the following six:

First, the ceaseless pursuit of peace, in particular in war torn areas. That the world is in bad shape is clear in the number of conflicts that continue to rage. When previous UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon started his mandate in 2006, there were 13 open conflicts in the world. As he was about to end his mandate in 2016, there were 39 open conflicts and 11 situations of intense tensions. Pope Francis calls this a "third world war [being] fought piecemeal." And while many parts of the world are on fire, the firemen don't have enough water and, worse, are quarrelling and cross-vetoing at the horseshoe table on some of the most tragic of these conflicts.

No month goes by without our reiterating the Pope's appeal for peace and echoing the cries of those in war-torn areas for the international community, especially the Security Council, to act. We find constant opportunities to emphasize that, as Pope Francis told the UN General Assembly, "War is the negation of all rights and ... we must work tirelessly to avoid war between nations and peoples." In a particular way, we try to make sure the pleas of Christians and other religious and ethnic minorities in the Middle East, in Nigeria, in countries of dictatorial regimes and elsewhere don't get forgotten.

Second, and closely allied to the first, is the pursuit of disarmament, in particular nuclear disarmament and abolition. At the end of March, the Holy See will be actively participating in a Conference toward a “legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination.” Pope Francis spoke about the importance of such endeavors for the world when he addressed the UN General Assembly in September 2015, saying that strongly opposed to the pursuit of peace, the pacific resolution of disputes and the fostering of friendly relations among nations, is the “constant tendency to the proliferation of arms, especially weapons of mass destruction, such as nuclear weapons. An ethics and a law based on the threat of mutual destruction – and possibly the destruction of all mankind – are self-contradictory and an affront to the entire framework of the United Nations, which would end up as ‘nations united by fear and distrust.’”

Third, responding to the crisis of refugees, migrants, and internally displaced people across the globe. This has been a primordial and constant concern for the Holy See. But with today’s 255 million people crossing international borders, of whom 65.3 million qualify as refugees, the Holy See’s voice also takes a more urgent tone. Since actions speak louder than words and in order to underline how high a priority this issue is for him, Pope Francis undertook his first trip outside Rome to Lampedusa, the small island in the Mediterranean that has become a symbol of both death and salvation. Then he went to Lesbos to meet the refugees and forced migrants fleeing wars and persecutions, and, putting faces into his words of solidarity, he brought back with him to Rome a dozen Syrian refugees.

To say that migration is a huge issue in the United States of America as well is to major in understatement. Regardless of which side of the wall — of the argument, I mean — you are on, everyone knows how ‘huge’ it is. Consequently, it is a priority pastoral issue for the whole Church, starting with the US Conference of Catholic Bishops.

In his Address to the joint Congress on 24 September 2015, against the backdrop of Martin Luther King’s famous “I have a dream” speech, Pope Francis said that “the dream” continues: America “continues to be, for many, a land of ‘dreams.’ Dreams that lead to action, to participation, to commitment. Dreams that awaken what is deepest and truest in the life of a people.” Perhaps the best recalled passage of that Address was this passionate reminder: “In recent centuries, millions of people came to this land to pursue their dream of building a future in freedom. We, the people of this continent, are not fearful of foreigners, because most of us were once foreigners. I say this to you as the son of immigrants, knowing that so many of you are also descended from immigrants.”

Fourth, and related to the third, is fighting human trafficking and other forms of modern slavery. Pope Francis is universally recognized as the leading moral voice in the fight against trafficking in persons. It is one of the defining priorities of his papacy. Human trafficking, he said, is “an open wound on the body of contemporary society, a scourge upon the body of Christ... a crime against humanity.” If we are going to fight this toxic flood effectively, we must block its tributaries and address its root causes, like extreme poverty, corruption in governance, injustices and exclusion in the economic field, and the ethical degeneration that occurs when people are treated as objects, when, in the Pope’s words, they are “deceived, assaulted, often sold many times for different purposes and, in the end, killed or, in any case, physically and mentally

harmed, ending up discarded and abandoned.” The Pope exhorts us that now is the time for action.

Fifth, seeking to lift up those in extreme poverty. In his Address to the UN General Assembly, Pope Francis said, “Economic and social exclusion is a complete denial of human fraternity and a grave offense against human rights. The poorest are those who suffer most...: they are cast off by society [and] forced to live off what is discarded ..., [casualties] of today’s widespread and quietly growing ‘culture of waste.’ ... Government leaders must do everything possible to ensure that all can have the minimal spiritual and material means needed to live in dignity.”

Sixth, the fundamental and constant priority of the defense and promotion of the dignity of every human person and of the family. This is one of our most constant areas of emphasis, because some Member States and UN Agencies never cease to try to use every negotiation and mechanism they can to push the agenda of abortion, under the smokescreen of “sexual and reproductive health and rights,” the definition of gender not as male and female but as a social construction, as well as the redefinition of marriage and family. It is in this area that the Holy Father’s expression of “ideological colonization” is primarily relevant, especially when certain donor countries or a UN Agency uses development aid to pressure poor countries to adopting practices contrary to their religious beliefs and culture.

Pope Francis, before the UN General Assembly, called for “respect for the sacredness of every human life, of every man and every woman, the poor, the elderly, children, the infirm, the unborn, the unemployed, the abandoned, those considered disposable because they are only considered as part of a statistic.” He stressed that the “right to life” is the “common foundation” of all the pillars of integral human development. He urged governments to ensure “that all can have the minimum spiritual and material means needed to live in dignity and to create and support a family, which is the primary cell of any social development,” and defended the “primary right of the family to educate its children.”

Papal Diplomacy is Pastoral and Spiritual Diplomacy

Dear friends,

These priorities are aspects of Pope Francis’ and of the Church’s pastoral and spiritual diplomacy. To many, spirituality and diplomacy don’t mix and may even sound contradictory. Diplomacy, for them, is practically synonymous with two things: first, with guile, the willingness to lie placidly for the sake of one country’s interest’; and second, with worldliness, with elegant receptions of caviar and champagne filling the imagination! When as part of my duties I have to eat caviar, Saint Paul is almost there whispering in my ear: Eat caviar as if you were not eating it, and drink the chilliest vodka as if you were not drinking it! I shouldn’t be telling you this on Ash Wednesday!

Knowing fully well that there is much more to diplomacy than guile and champagne – indeed, that guile and endless receptions are far from the core of effective diplomacy – I insist on talking of a pastoral and spiritual diplomacy of the Holy Father. Diplomacy understood in this way is a charism, and charisms, we know, are beneficial not to the one who exercises them, but to the

community. In this sense, diplomacy is an essential art of a leader whose objective is the good of all and whose means to achieve that end is unselfish service.

This is Pope Francis' diplomacy before the world. We should therefore understand his diplomatic style and substance primarily within a spiritual key, conscious of the fact that no matter how famous he has become or how respected he is among the world leaders and ordinary citizens, he remains primarily a Pastor and Teacher, and for those of us who are Catholic, our Holy Father.

Thank you for your attention.