

**Pontifical diplomacy, hence of the Pope and with the Pope.**  
**State Diplomacy and Church Diplomacy**  
*by Monsignor Francesco Follo*

***Abstract***

From the V century A.D. until today, pontifical diplomacy, through the moral and political authority of the Pope and the diplomatic corps of the Holy See, pursues universal values (Peace, Truth and Justice) at the service of humanity and the universal Church, uniting faith and politics. As full member in multilateral contexts, both as an Observer and as a State Party to the Conventions, the Holy See is an interlocutor *super partes* in international and diplomatic relations with 183 countries. The present pontificate continues to mediate in inter-state disputes for peace, to form world opinion and to promote inter-religious dialogue.

***Introduction***

The title and content of this contribution refers to various texts, the most recent of which are two conferences delivered respectively on November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019 by H.E. Mgr. Paul Richard Gallagher Secretary for Relations with States, and on November 28<sup>th</sup>, 2019 by H.E. Card. Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State of His Holiness. Obviously, the pronouncements of these high prelates helped me to formulate and - above all - to clarify my presentation of Vatican diplomacy, taking into account its history and its specificity. Actually, if all diplomacy works for peace, that of the Holy Father and his close contributors excludes *a priori* war as an extreme form of diplomacy and is always inspired by transcendent, religious values.

In this regard, on November 15<sup>th</sup> 2019, in the conference entitled “Diplomacy of Values and Development”, H.E. Mons. Paul Richard Gallagher, Secretary for Relations with States, affirmed that the Holy See's diplomacy is «essentially aimed at pursuing the “values” that are proper to the Christian Revelation and that coincide with the deepest aspirations of Justice, Truth and Peace, which, although historically declined and with a variety of forms through the ecclesial Magisterium, are in their essence common to the man of every place, time and social extraction». The Eminent Archbishop then clarified that the relationship with values is at first sight something foreign to the common notion of diplomacy, as a science and art of the conduct of international relations. Diplomacy is at the service of the government of the State and pursues its ends: it is pure method that does not look at values.

However, that of the Holy See is indeed different from other diplomacies, even for the very fact of being both State Diplomacy and Church Diplomacy. The pontifical one is «a “diplomacy of values” and not an “instrumental diplomacy”. Yet, it is an instrument for the development of a full and authentic freedom of the Church and of men».

I think, therefore, that it is correct to claim that the primary purpose of the diplomacy exercised by the Pope and his associates is to defend and promote the good of the Catholic Church. However, this purpose does not withdraw from the good of humankind as a whole, especially of the poor.

On this regard, I quote an emblematic episode that happened in Berlin towards the end of World War II that I believe shows the decisive force of the Mission of the Holy See. Immediately after the surrender of Hitler's Germany, in the German capital almost entirely destroyed, a Russian General insisted on asking to whom that Apostolic Nuncio was accredited (Ambassador of the Holy See) - Monsignor Cesare Orsenigo - who was doing so much for the victims of war,

considering that there was no longer a government in Berlin. The French representative of the Allies answered in an intelligent and effective way: «To His Majesty the human misery<sup>1</sup>». On November 28<sup>th</sup> 2019, on the occasion of the inauguration of the Academic Year of the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Milan, His Eminence Cardinal Pietro Parolin, through his *Lectio Magistralis* entitled “A Diplomacy at the Service of Peace”, excellently illustrated the reason for pontifical diplomacy: «For what purpose does pontifical diplomacy act? To give an answer, we shall recall historical reasons. I believe that the arguments of Balladore-Pallieri and Vismara are still valid ( see G. Balladore Pallieri - G. Vismara, *Acta Pontificia Juris Gentium usque ad annum MCCCIV*, Vita e Pensiero, Milan 1946), as to affirm that it is an action continued over the centuries or it might be read following the course of events and decisions taken. Often, however, we neglect to point out that we are dealing with an action developed following the forms of permanent diplomacy. These forms have seen and see the Holy See as part of that network of stable relations between nations. This action, with all possible limits, is still today an instrument at the service of human coexistence and its aspiration to security, stability and peace. Pontifical diplomacy, in fact, although firmly anchored by its nature to primarily ecclesial tasks that place it at the service of the universal mission of the Church, remains projected in the work of guaranteeing a well-ordered world coexistence, that hoped-for peace which, far from being *equilibrium*, is in the first place synonymous and effect of justice».

With this premise, I can now develop my contribution from two perspectives. Firstly, the historical one, so that through knowledge of the past, we can better understand the relevance of the diplomacy of the Holy See, identified in the line of its tradition, and – secondly – the theoretical-practical dimension that makes manifest the nature of pontifical diplomacy and deepens its ultimate meaning, through exemplifications. In view of my mandate of Permanent Observer of the Holy See to UNESCO in Paris, this second part will describe the life of multilateral diplomacy and, in particular, the specificity of that of Pope Francis.

### **1. Historical outline**

Above of all, it is important to point out that the subject that acts in contact with the actors of international life is neither the Catholic Church as a community of believers, nor the Vatican City State - a tiny “support State” that ensures a minimum territory for the spiritual freedom of the Holy Father - but the Holy See: the Pope and the Roman Curia, spiritual and universal authority, as the sole centre of communion, sovereign subject of international , religious and moral law.

According to can. 361 of the *Codex Iuris Canonici* (CIC), the name “Holy See” means «not only the Roman Pontiff, but also (...) the Secretariat of State, the Council for Public Affairs of the Church [the current Section for Relations with States] and the other bodies of the Roman Curia»<sup>2</sup>.

The Roman Curia constitutes the central administration of the Church since, according to can. 360, the Pope habitually uses it to «deal with the questions of the universal Church»<sup>3</sup> and carries out its function in its name and under its authority, for the good and service of the Churches. Can. 113 § 1 specifies, moreover, that «the Catholic Church and the Apostolic See are moral persons *ex ipsa ordinatione divina*»<sup>4</sup>. This means that the Holy See, as an institution placed at the service of the ministry of communion entrusted by Christ to Peter, will remain, even if eventually reduced to its simple expression in the sole person of the Pope, until the end of time.

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<sup>1</sup> H. VAN BERGH, *Nuntius in Deutschland*, in *Weltbild*, 48-49, in Biffi M.M., *Mons. Cesare Orsenigo: Nunzio apostolico in Germania* (1930-1946), Milan 1997, 294

<sup>2</sup> CODE OF CANON LAW, Book II *The People of God*, II *The Hierarchical Constitution of the Church*, I The Supreme Authority of the Church, Cann. 361. See: [http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/\\_P1A.HTM](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/_P1A.HTM)

<sup>3</sup> CODE OF CANON LAW, Cann. 360. See: [http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/\\_P1A.HTM](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/_P1A.HTM)

<sup>4</sup> CODE OF CANON LAW, Book I, VI, *General Norms*, VI, *Physical And Juridic Persons*, Cann. 113. See: [http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/\\_PD.HTM](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/_PD.HTM)

This theological-canonical definition is corroborated by its historical-juridical condition: the place of the Holy See on the international scene is justified in that it is the supreme authority of the Catholic Church, which - in turn - through it is the holder of a true international statute.

### **1.1. *From its origins to the 14<sup>th</sup> century***

As I was saying, it is interesting to question history to discover that the contact between the Holy See and the international community was born in a specific ecclesial context: the celebration of ecumenical councils. So, even before the Popes had real temporal power.

The figure of the Apostolic Nuncio, in the modern sense of the word, namely the Pope's Ambassador invested with an ecclesial (to a local Church) and diplomatic (accredited to a government) mission was already present in the year 453, at the end of the Council of Chalcedon. In fact, once the Council closed, Pope St. Leo the Great asked his Legate, Julian de Cos, who had followed all the Council's work, to remain in place to help implement the decisions of that Council. In addition, to that end he provided him with two Letters of Credentials: one to accredit him to the local hierarchy, represented by Patriarch Marciano, and another for Theodosius, Emperor of Constantinople.

Later the *apocrisarians* (which translated means "legates") would appear and towards the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century the *legati nati*, who Rome would send to the different nations and who would enjoy a greater margin of manoeuvre towards the civil authorities of the place, compared to the local resident clerics.

With the 16<sup>th</sup> century, international life underwent a substantial change: the Nation-State made its appearance, acquiring its own well-defined personality. It did not hesitate to clash more and more violently with its neighbours. Moreover, diplomacy adapted to this new reality: the informing agent who made himself known and tried to gain the confidence of his interlocutors replaced the intriguing secret agent.

The princes adopted the *formula* that the Republic of Venice had developed with its credit institutions or commercial agencies. The diplomatic representatives were thus considered to arrive with pomp and circumstance, settling in their own homes and chancellery.

The Popes immediately adapted to the new situation and were also inspired by the Venetian model. Thus, the first Apostolic Nunciatures were established, headed by an archbishop sent from Rome: 1500 in Venice and Paris; 1513 in Vienna.

### **1.2. *Pontifical diplomacy from modern times to the present day***

It should be highlighted the intuition that Pope Clement XI had when he established the Academy of Ecclesiastical Nobles in 1701, with the aim of forming clerics for the mission of Pontifical Representatives. For three centuries, it has had its seat in Palazzo Severoli, in Piazza della Minerva in Rome.

The reports from these Nunciatures deal mainly with religious matters.

After the Reformation, pontifical diplomats dealt with the spiritual interests of the Church, in the context of the Catholic Reformation begun by the Council of Trent (1545 - 1563), in 1545: they would watch over the respect of canonical norms and their application, often defending also the freedom of the Church, against the pretensions of princes.

Certainly, pontifical diplomacy has always been an "instrument" used by the Popes to ensure - and if necessary, defend - the rights of the local churches. This has not prevented the Holy See from also participating in peace negotiations, especially those of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries: the Treaties of Münster (1648) and Westphalia (1648), the Peace of the Pyrenees (1659), the Peace of Aix-La-Chappelle (1668), the Treaty of Utrecht (1713), that of Radstatt (1714), or even organizing resistance against the Turks.

If, after the Treaty of Westphalia and even more so during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, due to the repeated invasions of the Papal States, papal diplomatic action was somewhat dampened, the Congress of Vienna in 1815 returned to its full luster. It is interesting to note that the singular recognition granted to the Pope (who in this historical period is still sovereign of the Papal State) was motivated by the fact that he is – above of all – the spiritual Head of the Catholic Church. As pointed out by Talleyrand, when presenting an obviously easily approved motion to the editorial committee of the Congress: «with regard to religious principles and the Catholic powers (Austria, France, Spain and Portugal) nothing has changed as much as the Pope [it was a matter of the right of precedence of the Papal Representative] »<sup>5</sup>. From this rapid historical retrospective, it emerges that what the international community has taken into consideration is that the Papacy is a *sui generis* moral power. Subsequent events would be a confirmation of this: between 1870 and 1929 (the year of the creation of the Vatican City State), when the Popes were divested of all temporal sovereignty, they continued to exercise the right, active and passive, of legation.

No one, since the early Middle Ages, has contested the international legitimacy of the Holy See; not the Soviets yesterday; not the Chinese today. There is no doubt about the Holy See's full inclusion in the international community. One number is enough: in 1978, when Karol Wojtyła was elected Supreme Pontiff, the Holy See maintained diplomatic relations with 84 countries. The number rose in 2019 to 183.

The Holy See enjoys international legal personality and presents itself, therefore, as an independent - sovereign - moral authority and that, as such, participates in international relations. Its action within nations, as a moral authority, aims at promoting an ethic of relations between the various players of the International Community.

## ***2. Exemplifications and brief reflections***

The second point of my presentation focuses on some examples related to the diplomacy of the Holy See today, with particular attention to what we might call the diplomacy of Francis.

First, as already underlined, the Holy See, a sovereign subject of international law, is a harmony of the global and the local, involving three Entities:

- 1) The Catholic Church,
- 2) The Vatican City, which is “the physical support” and “functional state” as it allows the Holy Father his function as Pope, *i.e.* to be Bishop of Rome and Pastor of the Universal Church.
- 3) The Holy See.

The Catholic Church moves on the world stage: an international religious institution with over 1.3 billion members, able to reach every corner of the planet, thanks to churches, schools and hospitals, with the privileged status of interlocutor of the other two so-called Abrahamic faiths - Islam and Judaism - and two generations of intense experience in interreligious dialogue.

It also has an esteemed Diplomatic Corps with very fine sight and hearing, boasting a much more widespread presence than any other Diplomatic Corps thanks to its 183 diplomatic relations and its network of Bishops, members of the clergy and faithful in each region and in every area. The Holy See knows what is happening in the world at both governmental and grassroots level enjoys extraordinary access to the highest political level in almost all Catholic countries and knows “who is who” in the communities of faith scattered throughout the world.

Moreover, thanks also to the fact that it has no national interests, the Holy See is considered an impartial player. In addition to its worldwide reach, there is the central role of the Holy See in the wider or worldwide intellectual and moral debate in which religion and public policy come together. We are witnessing the rebirth of religion as an influential factor in public life, public policy and international affairs.

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<sup>5</sup> J. L. TAURAN, *La presenza della Santa Sede negli organismi internazionali*, in *Il governo universale della Chiesa e i diritti della persona*, edited by O. Fumagalli Carulli, Milano 2003, p. 369.

Coming more specifically to my personal experience as Permanent Observer of the Holy See to UNESCO, I have on numerous occasions observed that the Holy See is highly regarded in the religious world and in particular in the world of ideas, as a source of inspiration of meaning and an exemplary model of conduct. This applies in particular to UNESCO. It is a stabilizing influence, of central importance in the world debate between faith and politics. Thanks in part to its international neutrality, the Holy See maintains a broad dialogue and is a credible speaker of numerous groups in African States, the Middle East, the Americas, Europe and Asia. This global presence, together with the experience it brings, means that the Holy See's thinking - on a wide range of different themes and sectors that transcend the usual foreign policy issues - has authority. Its role as speaker has been evident in several cases throughout its history. The Holy See has intervened several times as international arbitrator carrying out a discreet but effective work of mediation, pacifying and resolving.

### **2.1. Exemplifications**

There are several examples of the last 150 years. These range from the first intervention during the Franco-Prussian war of 1870, followed by the arbitrations between Germany and Spain over the Carolinas Islands in 1885; the intervention to redeem the dispute between England and Portugal over the borders of the Congo in 1890; the arbitration between Peru and Ecuador over the borders in 1893; the mediation proposed between England and Venezuela on the borders of Guyana in 1894; the arbitration between Haiti and the Dominican Republic in 1895; the Holy Father's appeal to Emperor Menelik of Ethiopia for Italian prisoners of war in 1896; the intervention of the Pope to avoid the war between Spain and the United States on the Cuba issue in 1898; the arbitration in the dispute between Argentina and Chile on the borders from 1900 to 1903; the agreement between Colombia and Peru to submit its internal disputes to papal arbitration in 1905; the arbitration on the possession of gold deposits in the dispute between Brazil and Peru from 1909 to 1910; the arbitration offered to Argentina, Brazil and Chile in 1914; the mediation in the dispute between Chile and Argentina on the Beagle Channel from 1978 to 1984; and finally, the intervention of the Pope for the thaw between the United States and Cuba in 2015.

An example of mediation to which I would like to highlight is the mediation of Pope John XXIII<sup>6</sup> on the occasion of the Cuban Missile Crisis. On 25 October 1962 he addressed a radio message to the peoples of the world and to the rulers with an appeal for peace in the world. The radio message was broadcast by Vatican Radio and retransmitted in various parts of the world. In addition, John XXIII wrote a letter to the Russian President Khrushchev in which he urged him to demonstrate with facts the interest of the Soviet Union in preserving peace. Pope John XXIII addressed the Russian President with these words:

«If you have the courage to recall the missile ships you will prove your love for your neighbor not only for your nation, but for the whole human family. You will go down in history as one of the pioneers of a revolution of values based on love. You can argue that you are not religious, but religion is not a set of precepts, but the commitment to action in the love of all humanity that when authentic joins the love of God, so even if you do not pronounce the name you are religious»<sup>7</sup>.

I wanted to mention this example because we can well say that starting from this first step in the improvement of relations with the USSR there will be subsequent approaches that will culminate with the *Ostpolitik* of Paul VI and above all, John Paul II.

In addition to the already mentioned and fairly close example of Pope Francis' mediation on the thaw between the United States and Cuba (2015) - the two leaders publicly thanked the Pope's intervention for the end of this 55-year frost - it is appropriate to recall also among the most recent

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<sup>6</sup> See also: A. CANAVERO, *Le aperture al mondo: Giovanni XXIII e le grandi potenze in conflitto*, in AA.VV., *L'ora che il mondo sta attraversando: Giovanni XXIII di fronte alla storia*, atti del Convegno, Bergamo 20-21 novembre 2008, edited by G. G. Merlo and F. Mores, Rome 2009.

<sup>7</sup> *John XXIII*, in *I Papi. Storia e segreti*, edited by C. Rendina, Roma 1993, p. 660.

cases the «peace process begun in Colombia where pontifical diplomacy has not failed to make a contribution; o [to] the situation in Nicaragua, where the Pope's Representative in the country participates as "observer" in the talks for national reconciliation; as well as the role played in the cyclical crises in African countries, as in the case of Mozambique, the object of the Holy Father's attention during his recent trip to that country» (Card. Pietro Parolin, *Lectio Magistralis*. Catholic University of the Sacred Heart of Milan, 30 November 2019)

The Holy See also plays a formative and transformative role in world opinion. Although it is extremely small geographically (hq 44), the Vatican City State, where the Holy See is located, is a sovereign entity with an unusually wide range of action in the world, affecting one sixth and more (*i.e.* Catholics) of the world's population. The Papacy is one of the primary opinion formers in the world.

Its international scope means that the Holy See has the capacity to contribute to shaping and influencing world affairs. Developments, events, speeches and declarations of the Holy See and the Pope are closely followed by the international media and public opinion.

Yet, pontifical diplomacy is not only about relations with States and, therefore, we can and must speak of a Church diplomacy, which concerns both ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue. For ecumenism, by way of example, I remember that when on 12 February 2016 the Pope met Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow, he chose Cuba as the meeting place, aware of making a choice of highly symbolic value. Worth mentioning are at least some of the significant passages of the "Joint Declaration": «We address, in a fervent appeal, all the parts that may be involved in the conflicts to demonstrate good will and to take part in the negotiating table<sup>8</sup>» and again: «Interreligious dialogue is indispensable in our disturbing times»<sup>9</sup>.

Concerning interreligious dialogue, I also point out that on 4 February 2019 the signing in Abu Dhabi (United Arab Emirates) by the Holy Father Francis and the Great Imam of Al-Azhar Ahmad Al-Tayyeb of the Document on "Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together"<sup>10</sup> «is a milestone for interreligious and intercultural dialogue, with political developments - in the highest and noblest sense of the term - that are easy to imagine, «a symbol of the embrace between East and West, between North and South and between all those who believe that God created us to know each other, to cooperate with each other and to live as brothers who love each other»<sup>11</sup>.

## **2.2. The Permanent Observation Mission of the Holy See to UNESCO**

I cannot help but refer here to the role of the Holy See in multilateral diplomacy. Through its Permanent Missions of Observation is accredited to all the Agencies of the United Nations, as well as to the European Union, to the Council of Europe. It also participates in the activities of other organizations, including the Organization of States.

Quoting the Code of Canon Law which places among the tasks of the Pontifical Representative that of "working to promote all that concerns peace, progress and cooperation among peoples" (can. 364, 5<sup>12</sup>)<sup>12</sup> and the Preamble of the Constitutive Act of UNESCO which says "since wars are born in the minds of men, it is in the spirit of men that the defenses of peace must be placed"<sup>13</sup>, we note the convergence of thought between the two entities.

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<sup>8</sup> *Joint declaration of Pope Francis and Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia*, 11, La Habana, Cuba, 12 February 2016. See: [http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/speeches/2016/february/documents/papa-francesco\\_20160212\\_dichiarazione-comune-kirill.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/speeches/2016/february/documents/papa-francesco_20160212_dichiarazione-comune-kirill.html)

<sup>9</sup> *Joint declaration*, 2016, 13.

<sup>10</sup> *A document on Human fraternity for world peace and living together*, Abu Dhabi, il 4 February 2019: [http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/travels/2019/outside/documents/papa-francesco\\_20190204\\_documento-fratellanza-umana.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/travels/2019/outside/documents/papa-francesco_20190204_documento-fratellanza-umana.html)

<sup>11</sup> *A document on Human fraternity for world peace and living together*, 2019

<sup>12</sup> *Legates of the Roman Pontiff*, Ch. V, Section I, Part II, Book II, in *Code of Canon Law*. <http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/P1B.HTM>.

<sup>13</sup> *Constitution of the United Nations Organizations for Education, Science and Culture*, London, 16 November 1945, p. 1.

In the multilateral sphere the action of the Holy See encounters an even broader field: UNESCO has always been and still is a privileged “stage” (modern *areopagus*), from which it is possible to give voice to a thought, to give life to ideas and reflections that radiate from there and can then reach the entire planet.

To demonstrate that the Holy See is not a temporal power, with political aims, but - as I was saying - a moral authority, it is sufficient to remember that it is not a member of the UN nor of UNESCO and that, therefore, it does not have the right to vote, with the exception of the World Heritage Committee where, having adhered to the Convention on the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage of 1972, it is in the position of State-Party and, consequently, can vote at every Session of its Committee, in which its Members are elected. In other cases, it enjoys the status of "Observer": this allows it to remain above the parties, being able to exercise its right to speak. In this regard, it could be said that the Holy See performs a purely “prophetic” function, in the biblical sense of the term. The white silhouettes of Paul VI and John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Pope Francis in the tribune of the Manhattan palace are strong images and always harbingers of meaning. In addition to this aspect of reference to transcendence, we should also that the Holy See has signed a number of Conventions, of which I point out in particular the regional ones for the recognition of university diplomas and higher studies.

The Holy See, in fact, devotes great attention to international juridical instruments and, in particular, to the Conventions of the Education Sector signed within UNESCO. By adhering to the Conventions on the Recognition of Educational Qualifications in the different regions of the world, the Holy See makes it possible to broaden access to education to the widest possible majority, while also promoting mutual understanding in religious and cultural diversity. This enables the Holy See to protect the approximately 1,700 universities and 210,000 Catholic schools in the world.

In the field of Education, the Holy See has signed 6 UNESCO Conventions:

- the *Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean* (1974), 30<sup>th</sup> November, 1977;
- the *Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Qualifications in Higher Education in the States of the Region of Europe* (1979), on 10<sup>th</sup> June 1982;
- the *Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Certificates, Degrees and Other Academic Qualifications in Higher Education in African States* (1981), 17<sup>th</sup> June 1998;
- the *Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Other Academic Qualifications in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific* (1983), 10<sup>th</sup> July 1995;
- the *Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region* (1997), 28<sup>th</sup> February 2001;
- the *Asia-Pacific Regional Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education* (Tokyo, 2011), 18<sup>th</sup> July 2018.

In the field of Culture, it has signed 5 Conventions and one Agreement:

- the *Convention on the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (Paris, 1972), 7<sup>th</sup> October 1982;
- the *Universal Convention on Copyright* (Paris, 1971) and its two Protocols, respectively on 24<sup>th</sup> July 1971 and 6<sup>th</sup> February 1980;
- the *Convention for the protection of phonogram producers against unauthorized duplication of their phonograms* (Geneva, 1971), 4<sup>th</sup> April 1977;
- the *Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, with its Implementing Regulation* (The Hague, 1954) and its two Protocols, respectively on 24<sup>th</sup> February 1958 and 26<sup>th</sup> March 1999.

- the *Universal Copyright Convention with the Appendix Declaration on Article XVII and Resolution on Article XI* (Geneva, 1952) and its three Protocols, 5<sup>th</sup> July 1955.
- the *Agreement on the import of educational, scientific and cultural materials, with Annexes A, B, C, D and E* (Florence, 1950), 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1979, and its *Protocol with Annexes from A to H*, 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1980.

### **2.3. *The Holy See and the United Nations***

Nevertheless, what does the Holy See emphasize to the 193 member countries of the United Nations?

1. All nations are equal: there are no large and small ones. All have equal dignity. Each has the right to safeguard and defend its independence, its cultural identity and to conduct its business independently and independently. Therefore, it supports the force of law and not the right of force.
2. Yet, the same nations are also in solidarity. Pope Francis frequently uses the expression “family of nations”. There is, therefore, also an “international common good”.
3. In this context, war must always be rejected and priority given to negotiation and the use of juridical instruments.

In these three aspects, the Holy See stands as a *super partes* actor, with more moral than political authority. Paul VI in his speech to the United Nations in 1965 stressed its role as “expert in humanity”.

The action of the Holy See has thus been able, many times, to contribute to creating a climate of greater trust among international partners and to more easily advocate the affirmation of a new philosophy of international relations that it should bring:

- a gradual decrease in military spending;
- to effective disarmament;
- the promotion of education for all, an inclusive and quality education;
- respect for cultures, religious traditions and religious freedom;
- solidarity with poor countries, helping them to be the architects of their own development.

Speaking of international governmental organizations, I would like to offer a reflection that is rarely presented in the various debates. It deals with the existence of two models of international organization: the first, exemplified in the United Nations Organization, sees States maintain their state prerogatives and through a treaty form the organization; in the second model we can no longer speak of organization, but more correctly of communion, since the parties, the dioceses of the whole body, are precisely in communion with the diocese of Rome, with the Pope of the universal Church.

If in the first case we speak of international organization, the second could rather be defined as an example of transnational organization.

### **3. *Conclusions***

In conclusion, I hope to have been exhaustive enough to show that the Holy See is at the service of men and nations, to help them walk together on the paths of life and hope. The Holy Father, addressing the Diplomatic Corps who had come to present his wishes for the beginning of the New Year, pointed out «that the Holy See’s reason for being within the community of nations is to be the voice that human conscience awaits without diminishing the contribution of other religious traditions».

This service of conscience is also the only ambition of pontifical diplomats who seek, through their presence, their action and through the mediation of the diplomatic instrument, to convince those who hold the responsibility of societies that violence, fear, evil, mistrust and death cannot have the last word. Those familiar with Christianity will not be surprised: the Christian, in fact, does not believe in the fatality of history. He knows that, with God’s help, man can fertilise the world’s path with beauty, goodness and truth.



Thus, it is for this reason that the Holy See is not a promoter of the law of force but a guarantor of the force of law. In Francis' diplomacy, the concept of mercy also becomes a political category. The power of mercy, in fact, if it sweep over the world with its great arms, is capable of changing historical processes to their very meaning.

The momentous scope of attributing a value, even political and not only religious, to the concept of mercy has already been understood by many and not only in the ecclesial sphere. Two examples: H.E. Mrs. Samba-Panza, Head of State of the Transition of the Central African Republic, and Mr. Eugenio Scalfari, Founder and former Director of the Italian daily newspaper *La Repubblica*, who adds «there are many people (...) who also judge Francis as a prophetic spirit that affects politics, the high one that is based on the civic spirit and the good of a Community».

To sum up, I believe that Vatican diplomacy, as it developed from Pope St. John Paul II and as it was carried out creatively by Pope Francis, can be called the “Diplomacy of Mercy”. It is above all Pope Francis who has made “mercy” a political category, because the idea of building a peaceful coexistence between the various *polis* by defending what is right and condemning injustice has been joined by the category of gift. It is a gift that is made forgiveness and therefore allows the true building of the civilizations of love (a phrase of St. Paul VI and several times taken up by successive Popes), where mercy becomes the highest form through which to practice justice and weave deeply human personal and social bonds, which allow the construction of the “City of Man”, shaped in the image of the “City of God”.