

# philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

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## Why an Ambassador to the Vatican?

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*Philippine Studies* vol. 5, no. 3 (1957): 268–270

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# Why an Ambassador to the Vatican?

JOSE MA. DELGADO

**I**T has scarcely been a week since the President of our Republic appointed me to the post of Ambassador of the Philippines to the Holy See. This action of the President, entirely apart from personal considerations, should be a cause for joy on the part of every Filipino. For it was both necessary and desirable that this Republic, the only Catholic nation in the entire Orient, should at this critical time in history be officially represented at the center of Christendom. I would like to review briefly some of the reasons which make this conclusion so evident.

To merit the establishment of diplomatic relations, a power must first of all be sovereign and independent. For example, even though the Hawaiian Islands are a natural trade center between the United States and the Philippines and have a large Filipino community dwelling there, still our government sends no ambassador to Hawaii because that territory is not an independent state. The Holy See however is a sovereign and independent government by divine right. The Lateran Treaty of 1929 recognized this fundamental right and its necessary corollary, the right to some independent territory. Thus out of the ruins of the ancient Papal States arose the new state of Vatican City, sovereign and independent, whose ruler is the Pope.

The second condition which must be fulfilled before initiating diplomatic relations, is that a power must be of sufficient importance to warrant the cost of keeping a representative there. On the sheer ground of independence and sovereignty, there are many nations which might aspire to official diplomatic relations with our government. But the return, even in terms of good-will, would hardly justify the financial investment.

Does the Holy See meet this second criterion? In area, Vatican City comprises a little over a square mile. There is no trade involved. In fact the Vatican today is much less a political government than were the Papal States. These are rather obvious objections. Nevertheless they are outweighed by other considerations whose value cannot be measured in terms of pesos and centavos. To limit one's horizons to geographical size alone is simply unrealistic. Vatican City is the territory of the Pope, and the Pope is no mere figurehead but the real spiritual ruler of the largest body of religious believers on earth. His influence extends to every point on the globe where Catholics dwell. Even viewed from a purely worldly perspective, this sphere of influence is immense.

Moreover the Vatican is one of the outstanding diplomatic listening posts in the world. It is a neutral post where representatives of many powers are assembled. This will afford us the advantage of observing important changes in European politics and of informing our government of their significance in the eyes of the Pope. Indeed it is not inconceivable that in the event of a future difficulty arising between the Philippines and some other nation, our Republic would find in the good offices of the Holy Father a very helpful influence.

Our final reason for initiating and maintaining this official relationship with the Holy See is that it is a gesture of good will. Traditionally, diplomatic relations exist only between those powers which are, technically at least, on friendly terms. Both in his official capacity and in his personal interest, His Holiness has left no doubts about his very real love for our country. To have continued to ignore him officially would

be tantamount to insulting one who is the recognized spiritual Father of the vast majority of our people. Thus the activities and the interest of the Catholic Church in the spiritual life of our people make it imperative to use the time-honored method of diplomatic representation to further mutual understanding. By this very action we strengthen our spiritual leadership among our fellow Orientals.

These then are the solid reasons for the establishment of full diplomatic representation with the Holy See. In filling this important post, the President has given to the entire nation ample cause for rejoicing.

The city called Rome conjures up a variety of associations. To the military man it recalls the tread of Caesar's legions, to the classicist the ruins of the ancient forum, to the lawyer the rolling phrases of the *Pro Lege Manilia*; but to the Catholic there rises above all these the majestic dome of St. Peter's—a symbol of the tranquillity and order which emanates from the Vicar of Christ on earth.

In the very real crisis which today threatens the peace of the entire world the interests of Church and State are one: to promote the ends of justice and peace. There is no stauncher defender of the rights of small nations than the ruler of Vatican City. As Head of the Universal Church, the Pope can speak our cause to the whole world. In accepting this high honor therefore I feel that no personal sacrifices can outweigh the service I can thus render to my country and to my faith.