



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO H.E. Mr DEBAPRIYA BHATTACHARYA
NEW AMBASSADOR OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC
OF BANGLADESH TO THE HOLY SEE***

Thursday, 29 May 2008

Mr Ambassador,

I am pleased to receive you today as you present the Letters of Credence whereby His Excellency President Iajuddin Ahmed has appointed you Ambassador of the People's Republic of Bangladesh to the Holy See. I would ask you to convey my cordial greetings to him and to the members of the Government, together with an assurance of my good wishes for the well-being of all your fellow citizens.

Established thirty-five years ago, diplomatic relations between the Holy See and Bangladesh have been strengthened by a mutual concern for promoting goodwill in a world increasingly more connected, yet not without signs of new divisions and deeply troubling forms of violence and injustice. These phenomena present new challenges to the whole human family, eliciting an acute sense that more vigorous international cooperation is needed to ensure that the aspirations of all, especially the poor and the weak, are given full voice (cf. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 43). Mr Ambassador, I am confident that your country's active participation in bodies such as the United Nations Organization will contribute to the "culture of peace" which Bangladesh desires to build at home and abroad. By engaging in these conversations at the international level, your country will play a role in harmonizing the actions of the global community to attain the common objectives of peace and development (cf. *Address to the General Assembly of the United Nations Organization*, 18 April 2008).

As Your Excellency has suggested, a robust democracy needs more than a set of rules to be sustainable; it requires citizens to embrace the underlying values which inspire democratic

institutions and procedures, such as the dignity of the human person, a genuine respect for human rights, and a commitment to the common good as the guiding criterion for political life (cf. *Centesimus Annus*, 46). By striving to enhance a general consensus about the central importance of these fundamental values, the leaders of your nation will pave the way for stable governance and the harmonious coexistence of all who call Bangladesh their home. As your country prepares to hold general elections within the current year, I am confident that its citizens will reflect upon and renew their appreciation for the moral underpinnings which make authentic democracy possible. Social advancement and cohesion requires all – individuals, families, elected officials, civil servants and professionals – to embrace willingly their responsibility to contribute to community life with integrity, honesty and a sense of service (cf. *Pacem in Terris*, 55; *Centesimus Annus*, 46). In particular, those running for public office must be willing to set aside personal interests to safeguard the common good of the people whom they represent and serve. Your Excellency has pointed to the challenge of rebuilding representative institutions which have deteriorated despite the country's observance of democratic processes in selecting recent governments. This crucial task of restoring confidence in these and other democratic institutions will call for strong leadership on the part of men and women who are trustworthy, fair and competent. No doubt the people of Bangladesh will look for these qualities in their candidates as they exercise the right to vote in a polling process that itself reflects the very values upon which democracy depends (cf. *Centesimus Annus*, 46).

A vibrant educational system is essential to strong democracies. Both the State and the Church have respective roles in helping families impart wisdom, knowledge and moral virtue to their children, so that they will come to recognize the dignity common to all men and women, including those belonging to cultures and religions different from their own. The Church seeks to contribute to this end by establishing schools that attend not only to the cognitive development of children, but the spiritual and moral as well. Insofar as these and other faith-based schools perform the public service of training young people in tolerance and respect, they should therefore receive the support they need, including financial assistance, so as to benefit the entire human family.

Yours is a country that has made significant strides in economic growth over the last several years. Yet this has not always translated into a proportionate alleviation of poverty and an increase in opportunities for employment. Long-term stability in the economic sector is organically linked to other spheres of civic life, including public institutions and a well-functioning educational system. The former promotes the efficiency and transparency that foster economic growth (cf. *Centesimus Annus*, 48), and the latter is "society's most valuable tool for furthering development and economic progress" (*Populorum Progressio*, 35). For this reason, a nation's economic goals must always be placed within the broader horizon of its moral, civil and cultural growth (cf. *Centesimus Annus*, 29). Furthermore, lasting economic development occurs as a result of the dynamic interaction between private initiative, public authority and the support of international organizations (cf. *ibid.*, 10; 32; 49). For her part, the Church, in her constant solicitude for the integral good of the human person, echoes mankind's aspirations to secure the material goods necessary for corporal and spiritual

well-being (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 14). Indeed, she is firmly convinced that development is ultimately a question of peace, “because it helps to achieve what is good for others and for the human community as a whole” (*Message for the 1987 World Day of Peace*, 7).

Mr Ambassador, as you begin your service, I renew my good wishes for the success of your mission. I assure you that the various offices of the Holy See stand ready to assist you in fulfilling your duties. Upon you, your family and all the people of Bangladesh, I cordially invoke God’s blessings of strength and peace.

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