



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO HER EXCELLENCY Mrs. CHITRA NARAYANAN
NEW AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDIA
TO THE HOLY SEE****

Friday, 29 May 2009

Madam Ambassador,

I am pleased to welcome you today and to accept the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of India to the Holy See. Thanking you for the kind words which you have addressed to me in your own name and on behalf of the Government, I would ask to reciprocate my own respectful greetings to Her Excellency, Mrs Pratibha Patil, President of the Republic, and to the re-elected Prime Minister, His Excellency Mr Manmohan Singh, assuring them of my prayers for their well-being and for that of all the people of India.

India is a land fertile with ancient wisdom. Her people, representing many different religions and cultures, are sensitive to the need for self-awareness, integrity and harmonious coexistence with one's neighbour for overall personal and social well-being. The immense variety within your borders opens a range of possibilities for dialogue between philosophies and religious traditions intent upon probing life's deepest questions. Cultivating this dialogue not only enriches your own Nation but serves as an example to others throughout Asia and indeed throughout the world.

Notwithstanding the financial hardships currently facing the entire global community, India has made remarkable economic strides in recent years. Other nations have drawn inspiration from the diligence, human ingenuity and foresight which have contributed to your country's growth. Increased prosperity calls for heightened vigilance to ensure that the poor are protected from being exploited by the unbridled mechanisms of the economy which often tend to profit only an elite few. Hence the motive for your Country's ambitious rural jobs programme which was designed to help the disadvantaged – especially the rural poor – to earn a subsistent wage by

participating in building projects and other cooperative initiatives. Programmes such as this show that labour is never a mere commodity but a specifically human activity. They must therefore be implemented in a way that upholds human dignity and repudiates any temptation to favouritism, corruption or fraud.

The principle of subsidiarity is of particular value in this regard. A society that allows subordinate organizations to perform their proper activities encourages citizens to take an active part in building up the common good, placing themselves at the service of others and committing themselves to resolving differences justly and peacefully. Subsidiarity both presupposes and fosters individual responsibility, enjoining all members of society to seek the good of others as their own. While bureaucratic structures are necessary, it must always be kept in mind that the various levels of governance – national, regional, and local – are oriented towards the service of citizens, as they themselves are administered by citizens.

Democratic systems of governance must be kept in check by broad social participation. Having recently completed an important round of national elections, India has shown the world that this key democratic process is not only possible, but can be conducted in an atmosphere of civility and peace. As the newly elected face the challenges ahead of them, I am confident that the same spirit of patient cooperation will prevail, sustaining them in their weighty responsibility of drafting laws and deliberating social policy. May they be ready to subordinate special interests, placing them within the wider context of the common good which is an essential and indispensable goal of political authority (cf. *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 409).

Madam Ambassador, as Chief Shepherd of the Catholic Church, I join religious and governmental leaders throughout the world who share a common desire that all members of the human family enjoy the freedom to practise religion and engage in civil life without fear of adverse repercussions on account of their beliefs. I therefore cannot help but express my deep concern for Christians who have suffered from outbreaks of violence in some areas within your borders. Today I have the opportunity to express my appreciation for your Country's efforts to provide the afflicted with shelter and assistance, relief and rehabilitation, as well as for the measures taken to implement criminal investigations and fair judicial processes to resolve these issues. I appeal to all to show respect for human dignity by rejecting hatred and renouncing violence in all its forms.

For her part, the Catholic Church in your Country will continue to play a role promoting peace, harmony and reconciliation between followers of all religions, especially through education and formation in the virtues of justice, forbearance and charity. Indeed, this is the inherent goal of all genuine forms of education since – in conformity with the dignity of the human person and the call of all men and women to live in community – they aim at cultivating moral virtues and preparing young people to embrace their social responsibilities with a refined sensibility for what is good, just and noble.

Madam Ambassador, as you assume your responsibilities within the diplomatic community accredited to the Holy See, I offer you my good wishes for the successful fulfilment of your high mission. I assure you that the various offices and departments of the Roman Curia will always be ready to assist you. Upon yourself and upon the beloved people of India I invoke abundant divine blessings.

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