



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO H. E. MR SAIDULLA KHAN DELHAVI
NEW AMBASSADOR OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC
OF PAKISTAN TO THE HOLY SEE***

Friday, 22 March 1985

Mr Ambassador,

I am pleased to welcome you to the exercise of your mission as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and I gladly accept the Letters of Credence which authorize you to represent your country before the Holy See.

I thank you for the greeting you have expressed on behalf of your President, General Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq, and I would ask you to convey to him the assurance of my prayerful good wishes for the peace and well-being of all the citizens of your country.

You had the kindness to refer to the address which I gave to the members of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See in January of this year. From that address you have drawn attention to what I affirmed about the qualities that must characterize international relations if peace is to be preserved and strengthened: reciprocity, solidarity and effective collaboration.

Just as these qualities are the necessary foundation of peaceful relations between nations and groups of nations, they also constitute the firm foundation of harmonious and fruitful relations between different sectors of the population within a given country, and even between individuals in their dealings with each other. Respect for these qualities, and the endeavour to resolve difficulties in sincere dialogue, will ensure that the just rights of all are guaranteed and effectively safeguarded. Where the spirit of reciprocity, solidarity and collaboration prevails, no one will wish to be treated with honour without feeling, at the same time, the obligation to honour others in turn.

All of this has particular relevance with regard to religious freedom, a basic human right about which I also spoke during the January meeting with the Diplomatic Corps. "At issue here - I stated - is the dignity of man in opening himself to religious faith by a free homage of mind and of heart, with grace, according to what his well-formed conscience discovers and prescribes" (IOANNIS PAULI PP. II *Allocutio ad Legatos Nationum apud sedem Apostolicam constitutos habita*, 3, die 12 ian. 1985: vide *supra*, pp. 53 ss). In this respect I have often repeated that the Catholic Church does not seek special consideration, but only the *freedom* to exist and to exercise her mission of love and service, in full respect for consciences, and "for the distinction between the political and the religious domains".

I have been greatly encouraged by public expressions of appreciation, on the part of authoritative members of your Government, of the contribution of Christians to the progress and prosperity of Pakistan. While the Christian community in your country forms a minority, it seeks to offer its own specific collaboration to the cause of Pakistan, with a full commitment to building up the life of the nation through the educational and charitable activities of Church personnel, as well as through the witness of Christians as true citizens of their country.

The Holy See holds in particular esteem the spirit of equality before the law between the various religious bodies which is in the best tradition of Pakistan - a spirit that has recently been reaffirmed by your President in his Christmas message to Christians. It is my hope that outstanding difficulties in this area will be resolved with respect for this cherished principle.

You have referred to the grave problem of the presence in your country of an immense number of displaced persons from Afghanistan. I am very much aware of the serious strain which this sad situation places on the social and economic resources of Pakistan. The response of your Government in providing as much assistance as possible to these displaced persons deserves ample recognition and support. The Catholic Church, for her part, will continue to collaborate as much as possible to alleviate the sufferings of those who have lost home and property in their homeland. The plight of these refugees is a challenge to the world community, not only as an object of aid and human solidarity, but as a test of the will to ease international tensions and to create a better climate of understanding and dialogue.

Mr Ambassador, as you begin your mission, I am happy to acknowledge the good relations existing between your country and the Holy See, and I reaffirm the Holy See's willingness to strengthen these bonds in the climate of reciprocity, solidarity and collaboration of which we have been speaking. I assure you of the cooperation which you will always receive from us in the fulfilment of your mission, and I invoke upon you, and upon the Government and People you represent, the fullness of God's gifts.

*AAS 77 (1985), p. 1034-1035.

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L'Attività della Santa Sede 1985 pp. 212-214.

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