



# The Holy See

---

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY  
TO THE FAR EAST AND MAURITIUS

MEETING WITH THE REPRESENTATIVES  
OF THE WORLD OF CULTURE

*ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II*

*Atma Jaya Catholic University, Jakarta  
Thursday, 12 October 1989*

*Distinguished Professors,  
Dear Students,  
My Brothers and Sisters in Christ,  
Dear Friends,*

1. I am particularly pleased to have this opportunity to meet you all, the men and women of the *university community*, and those involved in the world of the arts and sciences in Indonesia. I greet you most cordially, and assure you of my esteem for your important work. Wherever I go in the fulfilment of my apostolic ministry, a meeting with members of the academic community is an occasion of great joy for me. It reminds me of my own happy and long-standing relationship with the university world in my native Poland, as a student and as a professor.

My warm greeting goes to the many young people here, representing the students of Indonesia. You are indeed an important part of Indonesia's future! This is for you a reason for rejoicing, but also the measure of your responsibility. I am grateful for the presence of so many distinguished teachers and scholars who so generously devote themselves to the noble task of educating these young men and women for the roles of leadership which they will soon be called upon to assume.

Our meeting today takes place on the campus of the *Catholic University of Atma Jaya*. Although

founded less than thirty years ago, this university, together with nine other Catholic universities in Indonesia, is heir to a centuries-old university tradition within the Catholic Church.

2. *It was the desire to serve society that inspired the Church's many efforts to establish schools and universities in Indonesia.* From the first years of her presence here, the Church chose to be an educator, seeking to help people to know the truth and to serve others in obedience to its demands. Today, throughout Indonesia, the Church continues to serve society through a network of educational institutions which provide instruction for over a million young people. These institutions have been maintained by the Catholic community at no small sacrifice, in a *spirit of openness to all Indonesians*, Catholic and non-Catholic alike. The existence today of ten internationally recognized Catholic universities and a number of other institutes of higher education is a source of immense pride for the Catholic community and a *concrete proof of the Church's commitment to the progress of society.*

In this context a special word of gratitude and encouragement is due to the many men and women religious who for generations have so generously contributed their talents and energy to establishing and developing centres of education at every level in your country. Nor can the support and initiative of Indonesia's laity go unmentioned. As is well known, this very university at Atma Jaya is the fruit of *the living faith of a generation of Indonesian Catholic lay intellectuals.* The Church rejoices in the generosity with which her members have worked for the education and training of Indonesia's youth, and appreciates the support they have received in this enterprise from the Indonesian government and from their fellow Catholics overseas.

3. Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen: allow me to reflect briefly with you on the *role of the university in society*, and the distinctive contribution that a Catholic university can make, both to the individuals who are in one way or another attached to it. as well as to the society in which it exists.

Universities form, in fact, an important part of that great network of persons, institutions and traditions from which *ideas arise, are tested, and are proposed to the wider community.* Academic research, debate and teaching have a profound influence upon men and women far beyond the university campus. This enormous yet often hidden influence of the universities makes them a powerful force within society.

In a very real way, it may be said that the university stands at the *crossroads of life and reflection*; it is a meeting-point and a forum for enriching debate among those dedicated to the search for knowledge of all kinds as indeed among those whose task it is to apply knowledge to life. The vocation of teachers and students to search for knowledge finds noble expression in their daily work, in their patient and painstaking research and in the exposition of ideas. The treasury of human knowledge is constantly expanding as scholars investigate reality with methods proper to their science. Precisely for this reason, there is an increasing call from members of the academic

world for a university education that permits the student to achieve an *ordered vision of reality*. The true challenge confronting university education today has to do with the very meaning of scientific and technological research, of society and culture. As I stated in a recent Address to an International Meeting on Higher Education: “what is at stake *is the very meaning of man*” (Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Allocutio ad eos qui III conventui Catholicarum Universitatum ab omnibus nationibus interfuerunt coram admissos*, 3 die 25 apr. 1989: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, XII, 1 [1989] 936).

In recent times, education has been faced with problems arising from the “splintering” of human knowledge into ever more numerous specializations. In this context, it is most appropriate that universities pursue the ideal of an *integral education of the human person*. To abandon this task would be to leave aside the deeper meaning of education itself, which should be understood not merely as training in certain skills, but also as a process which leads to the authentic human development of the individual in this life, to the creation of a just and peaceful social order, and ultimately to eternal happiness with God. Only by constantly striving for a higher synthesis of knowledge can one hope to satisfy the thirst for true wisdom which is so deeply inscribed in the human heart.

4. It is within this context that the Catholic university has its proper role. The Catholic university is of course called upon to engage in high quality research and teaching. But precisely because it is “Catholic”, the recognition it gives to man’s religious dimension in the search for truth is irrevocably joined to a concrete profession of faith. The task of learning and teaching is *guided by the light of the Church’s faith*.

What does it mean to say that a Catholic university should be guided by faith in Christ? It means that the university as an institution is committed to the belief that *Jesus Christ has revealed the truth about God and that in doing so he has definitively revealed the fundamental dignity of each and every human person* (Cfr. *Gaudium et Spes*, 22), regardless of how good or intelligent or useful others may consider that person to be.

The Catholic university’s commitment to higher education, then, is in fact *a commitment to man himself and to the development of all that is truly human*. It is for this reason that the Church has always supported the growth and development of institutions of higher learning. She wishes the dignity of the person to be affirmed, human rights and freedoms to be defended and promoted, justice and a social order marked by fellowship and mutual respect to be everywhere fostered. She wishes, in a word, to serve the people of society by proclaiming the sublime dignity of the human person, a truth that she herself has learned at the school of the Gospel.

5. As an institution, the Catholic university has *a specific vocation within the Church*. Here I would address in a particular way the Catholics within the university community. Dear brothers and sisters: you are called to build *bridges between the world of knowledge and the world of faith*.

*Through your witness of faith, you help the Church to fulfil her prophetic function in society, which is to purify and elevate all human activity through the light and power of the Gospel. The Church in no way rejects whatever is authentically human and true in given cultures, for she knows that contact with the Gospel will bring them to a more complete and fruitful realization (Cfr. Gaudium et Spes, 58).*

Your studies, your dialogue with colleagues, and the many ways in which you serve your fellow citizens will all help to bring the Church's presence and teaching to bear upon the challenges and questions facing your society. The history of Indonesia, particularly during her struggle for national independence, provides numerous examples of Christians whose witness to the Gospel has made no small contribution to the establishment of this Republic. Today it is your turn to bear the burdens of society and play an active part in the nation's development and growth.

6. The great work of promoting human dignity and serving society is one in which all members of the university, of *whatever religious tradition*, are called to share. Each of you, through your scholarly work, is in fact helping *to build the society of the future*, one that not only promises a better Indonesia for your children and your grandchildren, but also a better world for all peoples. Your culture has been deeply influenced by the wisdom of the ancient civilizations of the East, and it respects the fundamental role which religion plays in human existence. For this reason, one can hope that Indonesia will continue to avoid the tragic error of separating science and faith, a separation which has had disastrous consequences in some other parts of the world. In the vain hope of constructing a purely secular culture, certain societies have sacrificed higher values and the religious experience of peoples in favour of a material "progress" that has proven sterile and incapable of satisfying the deeper demands of the human spirit.

As educators and students of Indonesia, you are laying the foundations not only of your own future but of the future of the entire society in which you live. *It is important never to lose your enthusiasm and vision!* Education is a gift, not for yourselves alone, but to be shared in turn with others. It is a gift which enables you also to help those who are less fortunate than yourselves.

7. Dear friends: on the occasion of my visit to Atma Jaya, allow me to make this appeal to all of you. Do not make education an instrument of selfishness, but *realize its potential for good*, for the defence of the weak and the benefit of the poor. Dedicate yourselves generously to the service of others, help carry their burdens, and share with them the vision and the confidence which your education has given you!

Millions of human beings, in countries all over the world, are unable to meet the minimal requirements for a dignified existence. Yet, mankind today possesses the scientific and technical means to eliminate much of this poverty. This situation challenges universities, and Catholic universities in particular, to mobilize their scientific and academic resources in order to find ways to meet such grave human needs.

I am happy to know that the University Hospital of Atma Jaya, as well as other hospitals, provide lowcost medical treatment to the people of the surrounding neighbourhoods. There are countless areas of human need crying out for effective solidarity. *How much good can be done* by providing legal assistance, by conducting courses in home economics, by rendering technical aid in improving the quality of the environment! How many forms of social service can a university community initiate and inspire! What is needed is an academic culture that unites high standards of learning with *a profound and pervading ethic of real service* to the poor, of real service to the development of the whole human being and of all people (Cfr. Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 30). This is a goal towards which I urge you to strive with every effort and all your talents.

May the Most High God, the Source of all Good, guide and sustain you in the search for knowledge and the service of the truth! God bless Atma Jaya! God bless Indonesia!

© Copyright 1989 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

---

©Copyright - Libreria Editrice Vaticana