



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II
TO THE NEW AMBASSADOR
OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH
TO THE HOLY SEE***

Friday, 10 January 1992

Mr Ambassador,

I welcome you today to the Vatican and am pleased to accept the Letters of Credence appointing you Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. I take this opportunity to reaffirm my sentiments of esteem and friendship for the Bangladeshi people. Their warm hospitality during my visit to your country some five years ago remains for me a vivid memory, for I came as a "brother... in our common humanity..., our adoration of the One God... and [in] human solidarity" (John Paul II, *Address at the International Airport of Dacca*, 1, [19 Nov. 1986]) and thus I was received. I thank you for conveying the cordial greetings of His Excellency President Abdur Rahman Biswas, and I ask you to express to him and to the Government and citizens of your nation my prayerful best wishes for their efforts to advance the common good.

The tide of world events in the last few years is radically altering the way in which nations and peoples relate to one another. Insofar as this shift has brought about a lessening of international tensions, the peoples of the world have an unparalleled opportunity to work for development, and especially for the advancement of those nations which do not yet enjoy a proper share of the fruits of creation. Many human resources which, in the context of a world divided into opposing blocs, had previously been devoted to military purposes can now be made available and indeed ought to be used in the cause of progress. And among these, certain moral resources must not be underestimated, such as creative initiative, commitment to education and research, an unshakable resolve to achieve the goal of cooperation and peace, and generous self-sacrifice, to mention but a few. Specifically human goods such as these are most important weapons against underdevelopment (Cf. John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 31-32).

Effective international cooperation for development should broaden rather than diminish the scope for developing nations to act freely in determining the appropriate means by which to pursue the common good. Not only does true development demand that each nation grow in self-affirmation; it also requires that individual citizens should be enabled to advance in

the responsible exercise of their own personal freedom. Thus the establishment of more participatory and more just political structures, based upon a civil constitution which reflects the natural law and honours human dignity, "is the *necessary condition and sure guarantee* of the development of 'the whole individual and of all the people'" (John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 44). In the light of this truth about the individual and society, I take particular note of your mention of the efforts of the Bangladeshi people to achieve a more representative and more democratic form of government. I pray that Almighty God will help them to persevere and will crown those efforts with success.

I am pleased that you have referred to the Holy See as a force for the advancement of peace in the world. In her service of the cause of peace, the Church has a role and competence which are distinct from those proper to civil society. This distinctiveness, while precluding any identification of the Church with the political community, in no way lessens the urgency with which she seeks to serve man's personal and social vocation (Cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 76). In fidelity to her proper role of making known to people the path of their eternal destiny as established by the Creator, the Church proclaims the truth of the dignity of the human person and strengthens the solidarity which can lead to effective action for the common good. By the faithful discharge of her stewardship in transcendent matters, she is present in the temporal order, educating consciences to the truths and values which are basic to society's well-being.

Like all good citizens, the Catholics of your nation, in the light of the Gospel, make their own contribution to Bangladeshi society. The fact that they comprise a small minority in no way diminishes their pride in their homeland or their loyalty to her. Rather, their faith leads them to esteem their national heritage as one of God's great natural gifts and inspires them to recognize and respond to the needs of all their fellow-citizens. Among other activities, the Church in Bangladesh is deeply involved in running schools and charitable institutions which help to sustain and advance the dignity of the human person. It is committed to cooperating with all men and women of good will in resisting the threats to the moral health of the nation which come from error about the demands made by the divine law or rejection of these demands. Above all, Bangladeshi Catholics wish to share with their nation a vision of hope. Trusting in the power of the all-merciful God to conquer the evil in human hearts, they seek to inspire new courage in those who are wearied by the struggle against injustice and exploitation and are tempted to despair. God's cause is man's deliverance, and his divine assistance will never be lacking.

Harmony and peace among the followers of different religious traditions is an essential requirement of your country's efforts to meet the challenges with which it is faced. I am particularly hopeful that your national life will ever more clearly reflect what you have said about the tolerance and respect which Muslims of Bangladesh, on the basis of the teachings in the Holy Quran, have for the followers of other faiths. In fact, as I said in my Message for this year's World Day of Peace, good interreligious relations are a fundamental condition and essential aid for the construction of peace. Unless believers of different religions grow in respect for each other through dialogue and reconciliation, the opportunities offered to them to cooperate for the common good will be lost, and the world can ill-afford to forfeit such service to the human family. Without good interreligious relations there is a danger that religion could be degraded into a weapon of hostility and lead to a repetition of "the many painful wounds inflicted over the course of centuries" (John Paul II, *Message for the World Day of Peace 1992*). I renew the appeal that I made when visiting Bangladesh: "We who believe in the almighty power of the Most High God must be convinced that *with his help peace and reconciliation are possible*. Indeed it is his will that we work together to bring these about" (John Paul II, *Address to the Representatives of the Catholic Church*, 9, [19 Nov. 1986]).

Mr Ambassador, I express my best wishes for your term of service as your nation's Representative, and I assure you that the offices of the Holy See will give you all possible help as you fulfil your responsibilities. May God abundantly bless you and your fellow-citizens.

*AAS 85 (1993), p.54-56.

Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II, vol. XV, 1 pp. 57-60.

L'Attività della Santa Sede 1992 pp. 24-26.

L'Osservatore Romano 11.1.1992 p.6.

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