



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO H. E. MR TARIQ KAMAL KHAN
NEW AMBASSADOR OF THE ISLAMIC
REPUBLIC OF PAKISTAN TO THE HOLY SEE***

Thursday, 13 January 1994

Mr. Ambassador,

It is a pleasure for me today to welcome you to the Vatican and to accept the Letters of Credence appointing you Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to the Holy See. I am grateful for the good wishes offered on behalf of your fellow-citizens. Please convey to His Excellency the President my thanks for his cordial greetings, and assure him of my prayers that God the Almighty will sustain the leaders and people of Pakistan in working in a spirit of solidarity and justice to secure the prosperity and well-being of the entire nation.

You have affirmed, Mr. Ambassador, your Government's commitment to harmonious international relations, and you have spoken feelingly of the Pakistani people's desire to live in peace. The Holy See, in accordance with its particular nature, seeks to serve the community of nations by supporting initiatives aimed at implementing this fundamental longing of all people of good will.

A significant example of cooperation between the Church and the civil order is the worldwide Catholic community's participation in this year's observance of the International Year of the Family proclaimed by the United Nations. The Christian community seeks with renewed commitment to do all that it can to strengthen the family, the basic cell of society. In my Message for the 1994 "[World Day of Peace](#)" I gave special attention to the necessary link between sound family life and the advancement of the cause of world peace: "The domestic virtues, based upon a profound respect for human life and dignity, and practised in understanding, patience, mutual encouragement and forgiveness, enable the community of the family to live out the first and fundamental experience of peace" (John Paul II, [Message for the World Day of Peace 1994](#), 2. The truthfulness, justice, generosity and mutual respect that are learned and perfected in the

home are the necessary foundation for peace between nations, races and peoples.

Because the family is so crucial to a well-ordered society, the threat which poverty poses to peace is especially grave when material want endangers family stability. Therefore, development programmes aimed at eradicating the conditions which are so often the breeding ground for strife must make the good of the family their highest priority. Development cannot serve peace unless it first serves the family. In fact, experience shows that many well-intentioned international projects have failed precisely because they do not take into account the importance of family structures and relationships in every field of human endeavour, including the economy, education, and the sphere of cultural and social life.

Among the virtues fostered in the home, special mention is deservedly made of solidarity: a persevering determination to serve the common good (Cf. John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 38). It is in the communion of life shared by the family that its members are schooled in "that self-giving love which is capable of accepting those who are different, making their needs and demands its own, and allowing them to share in its own benefits" (John Paul II, *Message for the World Day of Peace 1994*, 2). In societies like that of Pakistan, with distinct minorities living in the midst of a strong cultural or religious majority, mutual respect is essential for that solidarity without which there can be no progress deserving of the name.

In such a society, diversity should never be seen as an obstacle to unity. Rather it can be recognized as an opportunity for individuals and groups to enrich the common patrimony of all. And because the common good, rightly understood, is based on the inviolable dignity of all those belonging to a society or nation, it is important that majorities respect the rights of minorities, while making it possible for them to take a full part in the life of the nation and to contribute effectively to its progress. Among the universal rights to be upheld is that of religious liberty, the cornerstone of all human rights (Cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 73). It is particularly gratifying to note that in recent remarks both the President and the Prime Minister referred to minorities as a "sacred trust" and reaffirmed the Government's commitment to observing and enforcing the constitutional guarantees protecting them.

The members of the Catholic community in Pakistan are eager to make their specific contribution to the well-being of their nation, since from the very origin of the Church her members have been taught that God wants us to be good citizens (Cf. 1 Pt. 2:15). In this regard the electorate's recent reaffirmation of Pakistan's democratic ideals and fundamental freedoms is particularly welcome. It is in just such a social context that the Church is able to pursue her spiritual and humanitarian mission. In her schools, hospitals and other works of social service, the love which her Founder commanded is made visible. In the upright lives of Pakistani Christians the Church seeks to bear witness to that transcendent moral order revealed by God down the ages. Together with their fellow-citizens who are followers of Islam, the members of the Catholic community seek, in a spirit of sincere dialogue, to make common cause "in order to safeguard and foster social justice, moral

values, peace and freedom" (*Nostra Aetate*, 3).

Your Excellency, as you take up your duties as your nation's Ambassador, I assure you that you can rely on the cooperation of all who serve in the offices and departments of the Holy See. I extend to you, to your loved ones and your colleagues my heartfelt good wishes, and I invoke upon you abundant divine blessings.

**Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, vol. XVII, 1 p.96-99.

L'Attività della Santa Sede 1994 p. 39-41.

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