



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. Mr. LALESHWAR KUMAR NARAYAN SINGH,
AMBASSADOR OF THE CO-OPERATIVE
REPUBLIC OF GUYANA TO THE HOLY SEE***

17 December 1998

Mr Ambassador,

It is with pleasure that I welcome you at the beginning of your mission as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana to the Holy See. I am especially happy to welcome you as the first Ambassador since diplomatic relations were established between us in 1997; and I trust that this important step will favour an even more fruitful relationship between us in the years to come. In accepting your Letters of Credence, I ask you to convey to President Janet Jagan and to your fellow citizens my good wishes and the assurance of my prayers for the peace and prosperity of the nation.

In its diplomatic relations, the Holy See seeks to offer a quite distinctive service, always on the side of peace and harmony among peoples, and with an eye to the common good and the integral development of individuals and nations. The Church offers this service at a time when diplomacy itself is passing through a period of transition. The task of diplomacy nowadays is increasingly determined by the challenges of globalization and the new threats to world peace which this entails. The key questions no longer concern territorial sovereignty — borders and territory — even if in some parts of the world this remains a problem. By and large, the threats to stability in the world now are extreme poverty, social inequalities, ethnic tensions, environmental pollution, the absence of democracy and the failure to respect human rights. These are the situations which diplomacy is called to address.

Some of these problems are not unknown in your own country. You yourself have noted that the values of democracy, good governance, human rights, dialogue and peace are close to the heart of the Government and people of Guyana; and since the return to democratic rule your

Government has striven to strengthen the democratic process and to ensure that respect for human rights becomes a fundamental element of the national ethos. The Holy See is fully supportive of this process, since there is no other basis which will enable Guyana to build a future worthy of the human dignity of its citizens. Smaller countries such as your own are especially vulnerable to the economic pressures which come with the process of globalization. There is the danger that economic globalization will increase the gap between rich and poor in the world, leaving developing countries to face ever more difficult challenges.

In such a situation, the Church will continue to work for a globalization of solidarity, aimed at ensuring that its potential benefits are enjoyed by all. This is a sure way of working for peace in today's world. The Church will also continue to plead for an alleviation of the crushing debt which condemns countries such as yours to a poverty from which there is no escape. In part, this debt is the result of unjust structures in the world economy, as the Holy See has not ceased to point out in recent years. But it is also true that in some places inept and even corrupt financial administration has contributed to the problem. The Holy See is confident that the determination of the Government of Guyana will ensure that its financial administration is part of the solution rather than part of the problem. External efforts without internal cooperation are of course unlikely to succeed.

Ethnic tension is another of the scourges of the planet which has not left Guyana untouched. To the extent that any group or groups are left feeling disenfranchised or unjustly treated, tension will remain and grow worse. It is clear that if the sorrows of the past are to be left behind and a new future built justice must be available to all. Insofar as the culture of the common good prevails, the fundamental causes of ethnic tension will disappear. Here again the Church pledges support for all efforts to construct a culture of dialogue rather than confrontation, of reconciliation rather than conflict.

The experience of recent years in other parts of the world has shown that, after long years of authoritarian rule by a government of materialist ideology, the task of reconstruction is slow and complex. The wounds inflicted by an ideology which denied the truth of the human person remain. The process of healing therefore demands a long and patient process of education which is not just a matter of communicating economically useful skills. If it were no more than this it would remain tied to the materialism which has done such damage in the past. The deeper education needed concerns the transcendent truth of the human person, without which it is meaningless to speak of human rights, which, as you yourself recognize, are absolutely essential for sustainable development. In this task of education the Church pledges her support, drawing as she does upon her extensive educational tradition and the religious commitment of so many of her members.

Given the Church's involvement in these areas, the Holy See's diplomatic activity strives to promote the values and ideals without which human society is bound to fail. Through diplomacy based upon ethical principles which place the human person at the centre of all analysis and

decision-making, the Church looks unequivocally to the spiritual, moral and material well-being of the human family. This is the interest and love which the Successor of Peter and the Church as a whole have for the people of Guyana as they move into a new future.

Mr Ambassador, as you enter the diplomatic community accredited to the Holy See, I assure you of the ready assistance of the various offices and agencies of the Roman Curia. May your mission serve to strengthen the bonds of understanding and cooperation between your Government and the Holy See. Upon you, your family and all the people of Guyana I invoke the abundant blessings of Almighty God.

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