



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. Mr. APAS DJUMAGULOV,
NEW AMBASSADOR OF KYRGYZSTAN
ACCREDITED TO THE HOLY SEE**

Thursday, 17 December 1998

Mr Ambassador,

1. I joyfully welcome you to the Vatican today at the start of your mission as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kyrgyz Republic to the Holy See. As I did with your predecessor, I would also like to extend a cordial welcome to you, and to congratulate you on this new, honourable post.
2. In your address to me, for which I thank you sincerely, you speak of Kyrgyzstan as a common home, mentioning the over 80 nationalities that must live together under the roof of a united, flourishing State. In this regard, you recalled that it is impossible to speak of true democracy and true humanity until foundations have been laid of respect for the human person, his dignity and his inalienable rights.
3. This is a conviction that I fully share, not only because it is timely, but because it is so closely connected with today's historical situation. Fifty years ago, after the end of a war which for some peoples meant even the denial of their right to exist, the General Assembly of the United Nations issued the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This was a formal act achieved after the sad experiences of the war. The same rights must be solemnly accorded to all individuals and all peoples. On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of this Declaration, celebrated recently, I would like to confirm a fundamental statement that is very dear to my heart: "Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world" (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Preamble).
4. Of course, these words did not merely aim at distancing us from the dreadful experiences of the last world war. Those principles were also meant to serve as the basis for a continual revision of societal norms, programmes and systems, to

be carried out from the one basic standpoint of man's well-being as a person in society. While the Church expresses her joy at the increased sensitivity to human rights and their implementation in your country, at the same time she shares with all people of good will the concern that acceptance of the Declaration of Human Rights in "letter" will mean their application everywhere in "spirit".

5. As you recalled in your address, the country you represent is pursuing a lofty objective: the peaceful transition to a market economy. I appreciate the fact that you are aware of the intrinsic contradiction of a development that would be limited to the economic aspect. Such a conception would too easily subordinate the human person with his deepest desires and needs to the economic programme or to profit alone. The intrinsic connection between a country's true development and respect for human rights reveals the moral dimension of the economic process. True human advancement in harmony with the essential, historical vocation of each person is not achieved by striving exclusively for material goods and services or by having perfect infrastructures available. Filling only people's hands would be doing too little. It is also a question of satisfying their heart's desires, for man's "being" is at least as important as his "having".

6. In these efforts for man's integral development, the Church is ready and willing to work with the members of Christian Churches and Ecclesial Communities, but also with those belonging to other religions. This is because each and every man and woman, society and nation has the duty to promote the development of every person and of the whole person in a way that corresponds to his dignity as a person.

7. When individuals and communities do not see moral, cultural and spiritual requirements being respected, requirements which are based on the dignity of the person and on the identity of every community, from the family to religious associations, all prosperity and every standard of living will, in the long run, be inadequate. Therefore, respect for human rights within a country has great importance: the right to life at every stage of its existence, the right of the family as a basic social community or "cell of society"; justice in working conditions and especially those rights which stem from the transcendent vocation of the human being. First among these is the right to the freedom to profess and practise one's own religious belief, as the Second Vatican Council stated in great detail in the Declaration *Dignitatis humanae*.

8. The restriction of the religious freedom of individuals and communities is not only a painful experience but touches the core of a person's dignity, regardless of the religion he professes or the world-view that sustains him. The restriction and violation of religious freedom cannot be reconciled with the dignity of the human person and his objective rights. I therefore consider it my duty to renew the appeal I made at the beginning of my Pontificate to all those on whom the organization of social and public life in some way depends. We earnestly request them "to respect the rights of religion and of the Church's activity. No privilege is asked for, but only respect for an elementary right. Actuation of this right is one of the fundamental tests of man's authentic progress" (Encyclical *Redemptor hominis*, n. 17).

9. In this regard, I am sure that you will succeed in further deepening the already good and friendly relations between the Holy See and the Kyrgyz Republic. Concrete steps could be the recognition of the Church as a reality with juridical personality and certain progress towards the conclusion of an agreement between the Holy See and the Kyrgyz Republic.

10. Mr. Ambassador, I gladly reciprocate the greetings you have conveyed to me from your President, to whom I express

my respects. As I offer you my cordial wishes at the beginning of your mission, I pray the Lord to pour out abundant heavenly gifts upon you, your relatives and your co-workers in the embassy of your beloved country.

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