



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. MR PRADAP PIBULSONGGRAM
AMBASSADOR OF THE KINGDOM OF THAILAND
TO THE HOLY SEE****

Thursday, 16 December 2004

Mr Ambassador,

I am pleased to welcome you to the Vatican and to accept the Letters of Credence appointing you Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of Thailand to the Holy See. I am grateful for the kind greetings which you bring from His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, and I request that you convey to him the assurance of my prayers for your country and its people. The long-standing ties between the Kingdom of Thailand and the Holy See find their origins in the seventeenth century when King Narai the Great and Pope Innocent XI began a cordial and friendly relationship. Indeed, this association remains a source of pride for both parties. Thailand continues admirably to cultivate a climate of religious tolerance and peaceful coexistence among its citizens. In fact, this noble tradition in which the followers of differing beliefs live together in harmony is one of the foundations of your country. Examples of this are found not only in the Crown's role as the protector of the nation's moral and religious values but also in the new constitution's guarantee of the right to full religious expression and religious liberty. It is regrettable, however, that even in the most tolerant of societies challenges to peaceful relationships among peoples can occur. In this regard, I assure Your Excellency that the Catholic Church has considerable experience in the field of inter-religious relations and is always willing to assist in fostering and facilitating dialogue to help resolve problems which may arise. One of the primary ways the Church supports civil society in developing respect and understanding between diverse groups is through her commitment to education. Proper instruction makes it possible for people to acquire the necessary knowledge to become fully contributing members of society, promoting the solidarity and respect which unite individuals, families, peoples and nations. Humanity yearns for harmony and serenity, and it is only through the active and enlightened participation of all sectors of public life that this desire can be fulfilled. Education rooted in authentic values is the key to the future, the heart of proper communication and the way towards real development. In Your Excellency's remarks you mentioned King Bhumibol Adulyadej's recognition that the people of Thailand need to offer one another mutual support. His philosophy for economic reform makes that clear, as it seeks to help those at the lowest economic levels by providing access to local

resources and technology. I urge your nation to continue to assist those who are most in need so that they may obtain the economic self-sufficiency to which they have a right. One of the most effective ways to ensure this is by safeguarding family life. In fact, family life shapes the social and ethical order of human work and is the true source of genuine economic progress (cf. Encyclical Letter *Laborem Exercens*, 10). In Asia the family has traditionally enjoyed a high level of esteem, regarded not only as the heart of interpersonal relationships but also as a place of economic security for its members. "The Family, therefore, must rightfully be seen as an essential agent of economic life, guided not by the market mentality but by the logic of sharing and solidarity among generations" (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 248). It is my hope that your Government will foster an ever greater respect for the importance of the family, convincing young people that material wealth and quick economic gain are no replacement for the loving rapport found in "domestic society". Your Excellency has indicated the important role Thailand plays in regional and global politics. The growth of your country's influence in the international community is a clear sign of its achievements in the social and political arenas. I pray that the civil authority will continue to participate actively in seeking solutions to today's grave global problems. Be assured that the Church remains committed to assist in this challenge, promoting respect for international law and, in particular, encouraging the international community to continue its search for multilateral mechanisms which will lead to the peaceful resolution of conflict and to wider access to humanitarian aid. Mr Ambassador, I offer you my best wishes at the beginning of your mission, and assure you of the readiness of the offices of the Holy See to assist you in your work. I invoke upon you and the beloved people of the Kingdom of Thailand abundant divine

blessings.

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