



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II

TO H.E. MR. BAMBANG PRAYITNO

NEW AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA

ACCREDITED TO THE HOLY SEE**Saturday, 10 January 2004* Mr Ambassador, I extend a warm welcome to you as I accept the Letters of Credence appointing you Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Indonesia to the Holy See. This occasion rekindles the memories of the visit I made to your country in 1989, when I experienced at first hand the hospitality, warmth and rich cultural traditions of the Indonesian people. With these recollections, I am grateful for the greetings and good wishes which you bring from President Megawati Soekarnoputri. I gladly reciprocate her kind sentiments, and I ask you to convey to her and to the Government and people of Indonesia the expression of my esteem and the assurance of my prayers for the Nation's continuing development and prosperity. As you have remarked, your country and the Holy See enjoy bonds of friendship and cooperation which are made ever stronger by our mutual commitment to working for the peace and well-being of all peoples at every level of society. This is an undertaking that involves all men and women of good will, and is today a task of unprecedented importance as the entire human family seeks effective means to counteract international terrorism. There is no question that this baneful scourge has grown more virulent in recent years, generating brutal massacres that serve only to exacerbate difficult situations, increase tensions and erode possibilities for peace among peoples and nations. Your own country has unfortunately had first-hand experience of such heinous acts of violence and disregard for the inviolability of innocent human life. The deep shock felt worldwide fifteen months ago when a terrorist bomb exploded in Bali still remains very much present in the mind and heart of the international community. Despite the contempt for human life that such terrorist attacks represent, our response must never be one of hatred or revenge. Nor are measures that are merely punitive or repressive sufficient. The fight against terrorism must also be conducted at the level of politics and education. Political mobilization is needed to eliminate the underlying causes of situations of injustice that can drive people to actions of desperation and violence. Likewise necessary is a commitment to programmes of education that are inspired by and foster respect for human life in all circumstances. In this way the unity of the human race will prevail, proving more powerful than any contingent division separating individuals, groups and peoples (cf. [*Message for the 2004 World Day of Peace*](#), No. 8). And it is precisely in this regard that the great religions of the world have a particularly important role to play. Interreligious understanding and cooperation will in fact do much to promote a clearer sense of the oneness of all mankind, helping to eradicate the social and cultural causes of terrorism. I am convinced moreover that Islamic, Christian and Jewish religious leaders must be at the forefront in condemning terrorism and in denying terrorists any form of religious or moral legitimacy. Dialogue must be promoted as a means of mutual awareness, as an exchange of spiritual patrimonies and as an instrument for peacefully overcoming differences. This is the only way to guarantee the unity, ensure the stability and build the democracy so ardently desired by the great Nation that you represent. In this same

regard, I am pleased to note your Government's active commitment to maintaining harmony among the followers of the different religions present in Indonesia. Indeed, the motto displayed on your national coat-of-arms — *Bihneka Tunggal Ika*, "unity in diversity" — expresses an important guiding principle as your country strives to build and strengthen a society based on the democratic principles of freedom and equality, regardless of language, ethnic background, cultural heritage or religion. The presidential elections scheduled to take place later this year — a truly historical moment for Indonesia — provide an excellent opportunity to reinforce these principles in the country's democratic institutions and to foster the full participation of all citizens in the public life of the Nation. This political climate can also prove to be of great advantage in the ongoing transformation of Indonesian society, as efforts are made to eliminate corruption and to ensure that the human rights of all citizens, especially those belonging to ethnic and religious minorities, are respected. For her part, the Catholic Church is an active partner in the continuing national programme of developing structures capable of satisfying the hopes and aspirations of all the peoples of the archipelago. Her role in the area of education is of particular importance: although Catholics account for only a very small part of the total population, they have developed an extensive and effective school system. The commitment to religious tolerance and to the fundamental principle of religious freedom allows the Church to make a priceless contribution to the life of the country. I am hopeful that the Government will continue to assist her in pursuing this mission by respecting the Catholic identity of her schools and educational activities. Mr Ambassador, I am sure that your mission will further strengthen the bonds of understanding and friendship between us. You can be assured that the Holy See will remain a committed partner with your country as it seeks to advance its own development and to be a force for stability and peace in Asia and within the wider community of nations. Upon yourself and the beloved people of the Republic of Indonesia I cordially invoke the abundant blessings of Almighty

God.

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