



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF PAUL VI
TO THE NEW AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDIA
TO THE HOLY SEE***

Monday, 24 May 1971

Mr. Ambassador,

On this solemn occasion of the presentation of your Letters of Credence as the new Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of India, We extend to you Our cordial greetings and thank you for the courteous words which you have spoken.

We would also ask you to convey to His Excellency the President Our warm gratitude for his kind good wishes, which We fully reciprocate, praying for his welfare and for the peace and prosperity of all the people of India.

The nation which you represent has entered a new phase of its history, in which all efforts must be concentrated on building its future not only on a stable material basis, but on equally firm spiritual foundations.

In this regard, We are happy to note your affirmation that in your country every religion is encouraged to flourish without any restriction and prejudice. Indeed, the constitution of your Republic solemnly recognizes the principle of religious liberty and bans discrimination on grounds of religion. As was stated in the Second Vatican Council's Message to Rulers, the Catholic Church is asking "only for freedom—freedom to believe and to preach her faith, freedom to love God and serve him, freedom to live and to bring to men her message of life".

Your Excellency was kind enough to make mention of the contribution which Christianity has already made in your country, not only in the strictly religious sphere, but also in the educational and humanitarian fields. The Church indeed pays homage to and desires to collaborate with all

who strive to promote man's integral development, in full respect for the religious orientation of life to its final end and for human freedom and dignity. Wherever there is special need, the principles of their religion call on the followers of Christ to do all that they can to help.

Another theme on which you touched-one which has been at the centre of Our thoughts since Our pontificate began-is that of peace. For the attainment and preservation of that blessing We depend on more than Our own efforts. We are happy to say that Our modest initiatives have received wide and generous support in every quarter, both on the part of those in high positions and on the part of ordinary, humble people. We thank God for it; and We pray to him unceasingly, as We did some years ago when We visited the shrine of Our Lady in Bandra, that he may "scatter the designs of pride, violence, vengeance and despotism. May he instead inspire thoughts of peace in all, statesmen, military men, formers of public opinion, peoples and rulers. That is the object of Our earnest prayer and of Our most ardent desires".

*AAS 63 (1971), p.547-548.

Insegnamenti di Paolo VI, vol. IX, p.466-467.

L'Attività della Santa Sede 1971, p.218.

L'Osservatore Romano 24-25.5.1971 p.1.

ORa n.22 p.4