



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II
TO THE NEW AMBASSADOR
OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA TO THE HOLY SEE***

Monday, 12 June 2000

Mr Ambassador, I extend a warm welcome to you as you present the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Indonesia to the Holy See. I take this opportunity to reaffirm my sentiments of esteem and friendship for the people of your country. I am grateful for the cordial greetings sent by President Abdurrachman Wahid and, with pleasant memories of his recent visit to Rome, I ask you to assure him of my prayers for his demanding mission and for the peace and well-being of the nation. The friendliness and hospitality of the people of Indonesia struck me forcibly during [my visit to your country in 1989](#). On that occasion, I experienced at first hand the great variety of religions, races and cultures which make up the mosaic of Indonesian society. This diversity is a great source of enrichment, since it brings together the complementary traits of different ethnic groups and through their interaction gives rise to a vibrant and productive national community. At the same time, this diversity also presents formidable challenges, as Indonesia strives to maintain its unity and build a future in which all citizens are able to contribute to the common good. In this regard, I repeat what I said in Jakarta in 1989: "*The only firm foundation of national unity is respect for all: respect for the differing opinions, convictions, customs and values which mark Indonesia's many citizens*". Indeed "the most secure basis for lasting unity and development as a nation is a profound respect for human life, for the inalienable rights of the human person" ([Address at the State Reception in Istana Negara Palace, 9 October 1989, No. 2](#)). In recent times, many important changes have taken place in your country. The Holy See is fully aware of the many positive aspects of those changes but also of the difficulties facing Indonesia along the path of reforms already begun and in its efforts to develop political and legal structures capable of satisfying the hopes and aspirations of all the peoples of the archipelago. I am hopeful that your country's commitment to democracy and greater accountability in the organs of government and administration will contribute to the progress of the nation and the fostering of social harmony and reconciliation. Authentic democracy is based on recognition of the inalienable dignity of every human person, from which human rights and duties flow. Failure to respect this dignity leads to the various and often tragic forms of discrimination, exploitation, social unrest and national and international conflict with which the world is unfortunately too familiar. Only when the dignity of the person is safeguarded can there be genuine development and lasting peace. Among fundamental human rights, religious freedom occupies a place of primary importance. The freedom

of individuals and communities to profess and practise their religion is essential for peaceful human coexistence. Recourse to violence in the name of religious belief is a travesty of the tenets of the major religions. Dialogue among the religions present in a territory is essential so that all may see that genuine religious belief inspires peace, encourages solidarity, promotes justice and upholds freedom (cf. *Address at the Closing Celebration of the Interreligious Assembly*, 28 October 1999, No. 3). In accordance with the tenets of Pancasila, Indonesia has had great regard for religious freedom as essential to the common good, and this conviction has enabled people of different religious traditions to live side by side in harmony. It has enabled your Catholic fellow-citizens, who have always desired to work for the good of their country, to make a full contribution to the life of the nation, most especially at the time of independence. The Church has been able to be active in the area of health care and in the social field. Through her educational activities, she has contributed to the training of citizens of all backgrounds and walks of life with regard to their rights and duties as part of the national community. It is essential that the principles which have allowed this cooperation should always be proclaimed anew, lest their importance for the life of the nation be neglected or forgotten. At the present time it is especially necessary to repeat this, given the rise of violence in parts of your country between those of different religious beliefs. My thoughts turn in particular to the Moluccas, where atrocities, massacres and destruction have taken place, again in recent days, and where persisting tensions continue to be a source of grave preoccupation. The international community looks to Indonesia to adopt the necessary measures to defuse tensions, to ensure that all citizens are treated as equal before the law, and to bring an immediate end to violence. I call on all involved to return to the path of dialogue and peaceful negotiation, in a spirit of mutual respect and tolerance. I urge everyone who has the true good of Indonesia at heart to work for a permanent cessation of conflict. Your Excellency has referred to the question of East Timor. As you know, this has been a long-standing matter of concern to the Holy See, which is pleased that a global and internationally accepted solution for the future of the region has finally been reached. Despite the tragic events of last year, the people of that territory now have the possibility of pursuing a new path in accordance with their deepest aspirations. It is my earnest hope that the Authorities in Dili and Jakarta will make every effort to build a relationship of friendship and cooperation, based on principles of justice, mutual respect and solidarity. Together with the Authorities and the international organizations, all must devote their energies to identifying the means which can best serve in a practical way to relieve the plight of refugees in West Timor, a problem to which you yourself have referred. A just solution which respects the freedom of the refugees themselves and which guarantees the availability of humanitarian assistance calls for increased cooperation between the parties involved. Your Excellency, in offering my best wishes at the beginning of your mission, I assure you of the readiness of the offices of the Holy See to assist you in your work. Upon yourself and all the citizens of the Republic of Indonesia I cordially invoke the abundant blessings of Almighty

God.

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