



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO H.E. Mr MD. ABDUL HANNAN
NEW AMBASSADOR OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH
TO THE HOLY SEE***

*Clementine Hall
Thursday, 17 December 2009*

Mr Ambassador,

It is my pleasure to welcome you today as you present the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed Ambassador of the People's Republic of Bangladesh to the Holy See. I am grateful for the greetings which you have brought to me from His Excellency President Zillur Rahman, and I would ask you to convey to him in turn my own prayerful good wishes for his continued well-being and that of the Bangladeshi people. The recent visit to the Vatican of the Prime Minister, Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina Wajed, provided a welcome opportunity to renew our common commitment to enhancing the spirit of cooperation which has characterized the cordial relations between the Holy See and Bangladesh for over thirty years.

Your Excellency, while your country still faces many economic, social and environmental challenges, the significant strides in development made in recent times have raised the hopes of its citizens and attracted the attention of the entire global community. Although few in number, Bangladesh's Catholics too share the expectation that the collaborative efforts which have made these gains possible will continue to animate the nation as its citizens set new goals for the future and devise fresh ways of achieving them.

One such goal has been the reduction of poverty. Its alleviation is inextricably tied to the extension of gainful employment. Work gives expression to human dignity, allowing men and women to realize their talents, develop their skills, and strengthen the bonds of solidarity with one another. This solidarity, in turn, also has a spiritual dimension, for by sharing the fruits of their labour with

one another – and most especially with those in need – people everywhere bear witness to the goodness of the Almighty and his concern for the poorest and the weakest.

In this context, one cannot but note the successes of your country's initiatives in micro-credit and micro-finance which are gradually bringing a new level of prosperity to your people. Moreover, these practices show signs of protecting the more vulnerable sectors of society from the risks and abuses of usury (cf. *Caritas in Veritate*, 65). May a fair and prudent application of innovative lending strategies support rural infrastructures, stimulate markets, and advance the development and dissemination of agricultural technology that will make the best use of the valuable human, natural and socio-economic resources of your land.

Improving standards of living also depends heavily on the commitment to the education of the young, both boys and girls. This has rightly been a priority for Bangladesh in recent decades, and achievements in this area give hope for the future. In the era of globalization, it is increasingly clear that greater access to education is essential for development at every level. Above all, it is essential for teachers to understand the nature of the human person and to cherish each and every student as a unique and precious individual, providing nourishment for the soul as well as the mind. The local Catholic Church is playing its part in this area through its widespread network of schools and other educational institutions. In this regard, the newly established Teachers' Training College is intended to provide suitably qualified teachers so as to ensure that standards will further improve and that the commitment to education will continue on a sound footing into the future. The recent positive meetings with the Ministry of Education and the establishment of a formal liaison between the Ministry and the Bishops to discuss matters of common interest should lead to enhanced cooperation in the field of education and make possible the speedy and amicable resolution of whatever issues may arise from time to time.

Your Excellency, I pray that Muslims, Hindus, Christians and all people of goodwill in your country will bear untiring witness to the peaceful coexistence that remains the vocation of the entire human race. To this end, all citizens – and particularly leaders – share in the responsibility of upholding the principles that underpin a just democratic system of governance. Intimidation and violence erode the very basis of social harmony and must be decried as offensive to human life and freedom. Showing a preferential love for the poor and the ailing, embracing the weak as precious in the sight of God: these are the ways by which society is infused with the breath of divine goodness that sustains the life of every creature.

Mr Ambassador, at the outset of your mission, I cordially extend to you my good wishes for its success, and I assure you of my prayers and the support of the various offices of the Holy See which stand ready to assist you. Upon you, the members of your family and all the citizens of Bangladesh I willingly invoke abundant divine blessings.

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