WELCOME CEREMONY*ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II*
AT THE ARRIVAL IN THAILAND*Royal Palace of Bangkok (Thailand)*
Thursday, 10 May 1984

Your Majesties,

1. This is a moment of intense joy for me. With great pleasure I have set foot on Thai soil. I am *greatly honoured* to be received by Your Majesties in this "land of smiles", as Thailand is known the world over, in this "land of freedom", which is what your name means.

I deeply appreciate the courtesy extended to me by Your Majesties in inviting me to visit your beautiful country. With respect and esteem I reciprocate your gracious manifestation of friendship. I express my profound gratitude for the special act of benevolence on the part of Your Majesties in sending His Highness the Crown Prince to receive me at the airport in your name.

I am also grateful for the assistance of the Prime Minister. In thanking him, I express my deferential greetings to all those invested with the responsibilities of government and who serve the well-being of the Thai people. I offer an especially warm and fraternal greeting to Cardinal Michael Michai Kitbunchu, Archbishop of Bangkok, the first Thai Cardinal in the history of the Catholic Church, and to my other brother Bishops.

2. My visit is a tribute to the long and friendly relations existing between Thailand and the Holy See. In coming here I have the honour to return the visit made by Your Majesties to my predecessor John XXIII in 1960. I also look forward to meeting His Holiness the Supreme Patriarch and to commemorate the visit that the former Supreme Patriarch paid to Paul VI in the year 1972. My predecessors were not able to return these visits. And so I am now happy to do so. I am very pleased to be able to visit my Catholic brethren, to pray with them and to encourage them in their activities of fraternal service.

3. I know that my stay in Thailand, although brief, will give me the opportunity to experience at firsthand the profound human values on which Thai social life and culture, with their customs and traditions, are based. To be a guest in the country that proclaims freedom as a constituent characteristic of its people is indeed a great honour. In our contemporary world, the history of Thai freedom and Thailand's legendary spirit of tolerance are a reminder of the deepest aspirations of the human family to live in peace, harmony and brotherhood. In particular, your respect for man's right to religious freedom renders immense honour to your land.

My visit is intended to be an expression of my personal thanks and the thanks of the whole Catholic Church to Your Majesties and to the Government and people of this noble land for the generous hospitality given to thousands and thousands of refugees from neighbouring countries. Your loving compassion towards these needy and suffering people makes me feel very close to you all, my brothers and sisters of the Thai nation, and it makes me feel at home in this great land of yours.

Upon your Majesties and upon all your beloved people I invoke God's choicest blessings.

---

*AAS 76 (1984) p. 1021-1022.

Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II, vol. VII, 1 pp. 1353-1354.

L'Osservatore Romano 12.5.1984 p. XXVII.

© Copyright 1984 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana