



The Holy See

*ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE AMBASSADOR OF FIJI TO THE HOLY SEE**

Saturday, 21 June 1986

Mr Ambassador,

I am happy to welcome Your Excellency on this occasion as you present the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Fiji. My pleasure in accepting your credentials at the start of your diplomatic mission to the Holy See is enhanced by the greeting and good wishes that you expressed on behalf of the Government and people of your country. I am most grateful for the kind and courteous sentiments that they reflect. It is my fervent hope that the diplomatic relations initiated between Fiji and the Holy See some three years ago will continue to exemplify the mutual trust, understanding and spirit of co-operation which have marked them from the outset.

I wish to assure you, Mr Ambassador, that I very much look forward to visiting your country later this year. I will come to Fiji primarily to fulfil my pastoral mission in the Church, grateful to Almighty God that the Gospel of Jesus Christ has taken firm root in the islands of the South Pacific. I note with satisfaction your remark that the Christian Gospel of love, tolerance and brotherhood is predominant in all the aspects of daily life.

Christianity is very well established in your nation, and at the same time, as you say, there are many adherents of Hinduism and Islam. My visit to Fiji will therefore offer me yet another opportunity to manifest the Catholic Church's respect for other religious traditions. The Church's teaching, as expressed in the Second Vatican Council, is that the dignity and freedom of conscience of every person is to be respected, regardless of race or creed. With this in mind, I praise the peace and harmony that exists between the different racial, religious and cultural sectors of your society. While maintaining its own individuality each group makes its own special contribution to the common good of all, being continually challenged to collaborate with the other races and religions in a spirit of mutual and social harmony.

I am most appreciative, Mr Ambassador, of your reference to my appeal during this International Year of Peace to turn the tensions of North and South, East and West into new relationships of solidarity and dialogue. It is indeed necessary to establish new types of international relations which will ensure justice and peace on the stable foundation of universal brotherhood. It is of course impossible simply to impose such international agreements from outside without a change of people's attitudes, for the roots of the tensions that threaten peace are found in the human heart. This conversion of heart will come primarily through dialogue which enables people to overcome their prejudices and to discover one another as members of the one human family, sharing the same hopes for peace. In this regard I gladly acknowledge your nation's active presence in the regional bodies as well as its contribution to the cause of peace.

Your Excellency, I trust that your mission here will produce many good results. As you fulfil your responsible service I wish to assure you of the Holy See's complete co-operation. I would ask you to convey my good wishes to the Governor-General, to the Prime Minister and to the members of the Government. And upon yourself and all the people of Fiji I invoke the abundant blessings of Almighty God.

*AAS 79 (1987), p.30-31.

Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II, vol. IX, 1 pp. 1882-1883,

L'Attività della Santa Sede 1986 pp. 494-495.

L'Osservatore Romano 22.6.1986 p.5.

L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English n.27 p.4.

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