



# The Holy See

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**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II**  
**TO H.E. Mr ACHJADI ACHID SJARIF**  
**NEW AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA**  
**TO THE HOLY SEE\*Wednesday, 7 November 1991**

*Mr Ambassador,*

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the Vatican and to accept the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Indonesia. Our meeting reminds me of the rich diversity of your country and its people which I came to know during my visit in 1989, and the experience of Indonesian hospitality remains a vivid memory. I am grateful for the kind greetings which you conveyed from His Excellency President Soeharto and the Government, and I gladly reciprocate with good wishes and the assurance of my prayers for the peace and prosperity of the entire nation.

The vastness of Indonesia, extending as she does across many thousands of islands, and the variety of her ethnic groups, cultures and languages have inspired the founders of the nation to build her unity on lofty and universal principles which enable all her citizens to feel that their natural and legitimate differences are appreciated and respected in the fundamental law which governs the life of the nation. These principles are embodied in your national philosophy of *Pancasila*, which holds that the secure basis for lasting unity and development as a nation lies in profound respect for human life, for the inalienable rights of the human person, and for the freedom of responsible citizens to determine their destiny as a people (cf. John Paul II, [\*Address at the Meeting with the President of Indonesia\*](#), 2 [9 Oct. 1989]). In such a context all citizens can commit themselves freely and decisively to the common task of building up society in harmony and well-being. The Catholic citizens of Indonesia have been active from the foundation of the State in fostering its advancement, in defending freedom and justice, in promoting education, health care and service to those in need. In cooperation with others and fulfilling her religious and humanitarian mission, the Church in Indonesia strengthens the spiritual values which enrich the life of individuals and of society itself.

The world is living through a time of profound social and political transformation. The breakdown of the Marxist system has changed the logic of relationships between the superpowers and between blocs of nations. A less confrontational and more confident international climate opens the way to important new possibilities of cooperation among the nations of the world in promoting progress and development. However, satisfaction at the positive aspects of this period of transition does not blind us to the grave dangers which are also present on the world's horizon: ethnic and nationalistic rivalries are reasserting themselves in many places, sometimes with tragic consequences of conflict and violence; and the growing economic imbalance between developed and developing nations and, within nations, between the prosperity of the few and the deprivation of the many is already a source of tensions which could have unforeseen results.

In her recent history, Indonesia too has had to face situations of a painful and complex nature, which show how difficult it can be to find that dynamic balance which would ensure the just protection of the overall interests of the nation and the fundamental rights of individuals and peoples. As a nation, Indonesia has a clear constitutional vision of the respect that is due to the objective diversity and specific character of each group. It is to be hoped that the wisdom which has inspired the basic principles of the Archipelago's millenary culture will favour a swift settlement of remaining tensions and will give further impulse to the values of humanism and civil harmony, with respect for everyone.

Nevertheless, this is truly a time of historic challenge for the whole human family. National leaders themselves and their peoples readily acknowledge that enormous resources must now be directed, not to the production of systems of death and destruction but to the building of peace, to alleviating the sufferings of refugees and the victims of hunger and disease, and to fostering the advancement of the poorer inhabitants of this planet. In order that such an effort may produce results, the reality of global interdependence must be accepted, in such a way that those in positions of responsibility rise above particular and nationalistic interests through a true sense of solidarity and concern for the common good.

At this time, as I wrote in my most recent Encyclical, "what is called for is a special effort to mobilize resources, which are not lacking in the world as a whole, for the purpose of economic growth and common development, redefining the priorities and hierarchies of values on the basis of which economic and political choices are made" (John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 28). Such a redefinition of the goals to be pursued must be inspired and guided by a precise vision of the nature and purpose of development and social progress, which can be no other than the complete well-being of the human person. I am pleased to note your reference to your country's efforts to provide present and future generations with improved conditions of life, not just at the level of material progress but also in the spiritual and religious spheres. It is this higher view of human needs which will enable your fellow-citizens to pursue a development that is genuinely beneficial and respectful of their deepest aspirations.

Mr Ambassador, the Holy See appreciates the efforts which Indonesia and other countries have been making to resolve some of the lamentable situations of injustice and contention existing in the South-East Asian region. In recent weeks the international community has been encouraged by the steps taken to achieve an improved climate of peace in Cambodia. As a member of the ASEAN group, your own country has been actively involved in promoting a solution to this longstanding situation of conflict. The recent tragic history of that peaceloving people should remind us of the terrible consequences to which traditional rivalries and ideological differences can lead when the value of human life is ignored and the demands of human dignity are trampled upon. It is my fervent hope that the Peace Accords signed in Paris just two weeks ago will bring a new period of stability and development to that beloved country, with consequent benefits for the peace of the entire region. The international community can do much to help the people of Cambodia to rebuild their society in respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms.

I express the hope that the Country of Pancasila will play a significant international role also in the specific sphere of the promotion of religious freedom, by offering to others the contribution of its rich experience in this area. Your country, in fact, attributes great importance to concord and cooperation among different religious traditions which, respecting one another's specific character, willingly work together to ensure the primacy of the values of the spirit and the harmonious cooperation of all believers in the one and Merciful God. At this time, when disagreements and forms of extremism have unfortunately reappeared in different parts of the world and, also in Asia, have clouded the image of certain religious groups, the Indonesian experience is significant. The reasons for the tolerance which characterizes her law and civic life constitute a positive example for the international community and especially for those countries which are linked with Indonesia by bonds of culture or common interests.

Mr Ambassador, I am fully confident that you will seek to strengthen further the bonds of understanding and friendship between your country and the Holy See. On my part I assure you of the willing cooperation of the various departments of the Roman Curia in the discharge of your lofty diplomatic mission. I pray that you will be happy in this new responsibility, and I invoke an abundance of divine blessings upon the beloved Indonesian people.

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\*AAS84 (1992), p. 963-966.

*Insegnamenti* XIV, 2 pp. 1088-1091.

*L'Attività della Santa Sede* 1991 pp. 930-932.

*L'Osservatore Romano* 8.11.1991 p.6.

*L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly edition in English* n.46 p.9.

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