



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE NEW AMBASSADOR OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA
TO THE HOLY SEE***

Saturday, 28 November 1992

Mr Ambassador,

It is a pleasure for me to welcome you to the Vatican and accept the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Papua New Guinea to the Holy See. With great joy I recall my Pastoral Visit in 1984 to your young and vigorous nation, surrounded as I was by the affection of its generous and hospitable people. I ask you now to convey my warm greetings and best wishes to the Governor General, the Prime Minister and all the people of Papua New Guinea.

It is reassuring to know that in your Constitution the citizens of your country pledge themselves to guarding the Christian principles upon which Papua New Guinea has been built. The foundation of all political, economic and social activity must be the defence and promotion of the "inalienable dignity of every person, irrespective of racial, ethnic, cultural or national origin, or religious belief" (John Paul II, *Message for the World Day of Peace 1989*, 3). By reason of this inherent dignity, every individual has universal and inviolable rights, which the State has an obligation to protect. Whenever people perceive that these rights are being disregarded, tension and conflict inevitably result.

Because of the widening gap between rich and poor, within nations and between countries, vast numbers of people are locked into poverty, lacking food, housing, medical care and education. These negative phenomena bespeak a "real disorder" and "institutional injustice" which continue to cry out for serious attention (Cf. John Paul II, *Inaugural Address on the Occasion of the 4th General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate*, [October 12, 1992], 15). Solutions to these problems can be found only if people are willing to change their mentality and behaviour, and to

reform the structures of economic, political and social life in the light of ethical and religious values (Cf. John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 60). An important objective of the Holy See's diplomatic relations and international activities is to encourage world leaders to promote a development which effectively safeguards personal dignity and authentic human advancement.

With a heavy heart I recall a situation which is causing great unrest within your own country. The dispute over the future identity of Bougainville has led to a tragic loss of life and extreme hardship for many people. As Pastor of the Universal Church, I encourage all parties involved to take two steps that can restore peace. A conversion of mind and heart and acceptance of the "fundamental unity of the human race, which takes its origin from the one God" (John Paul II, *Message for the World Day of Peace 1989*, 3). Is the first way to ending social conflict. Sincere acknowledgment of this principle leads to dialogue and negotiation—the second step to solving disputes. "The willingness of the parties involved to meet and talk to one another is the indispensable condition for reaching an equitable solution to the complex problems that can seriously obstruct peace" (*Ibid.*, 10). When dialogue is suspended for whatever reason, social cohesion is damaged and violence begins again. I urge all those involved in the Bougainville dispute to replace suspicion and division with a dialogue that is clear-sighted, honest and courageous (Cf. John Paul II, *Message for the World Day of Peace 1983*, 6). No matter how bitter the dissension, peacemakers must never abandon dialogue as the only sure means to restore harmony among peoples and nations.

Through the various activities which she has undertaken in Papua New Guinea, the Catholic Church endeavours to serve God by fostering the authentic well-being of all citizens. As Your Excellency has kindly noted, the Church has been a leader in the field of education, where she is committed not only to providing young people with useful skills, but also to developing their capacity to seek and know the truth, to grow in respect for others and to make their proper contribution to the common good. The Catholics of your country desire to promote authentic moral values in public life and to build a society founded upon human dignity and solidarity. Impelled by Christ's command to love their neighbour, they will continue their efforts to eradicate ignorance and alleviate human suffering through the network of schools, hospitals, dispensaries and other centres which are at the service of all, especially the poorest and most marginalized.

Mr Ambassador, I assure you of the ready assistance and cooperation of the various offices of the Holy See in fulfilling your mission, and I express my good wishes for its success. Upon yourself and all the beloved people of Papua New Guinea I cordially invoke the abundant blessings of Almighty God.

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