



# The Holy See

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## **ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II**

### **TO H.E. Mr M. ANWAR HASHIM**

#### **NEW AMBASSADOR OF BANGLADESH TO THE HOLY SEE\****Saturday, 19 November 1994 Mr.*

*Ambassador,* I am pleased to welcome you to the Vatican today and to accept the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. I gladly acknowledge the greetings which you have conveyed on behalf of President Abdur Rahman Biswas and which I cordially reciprocate. Please assure His Excellency and the Government and people of Bangladesh of my prayerful best wishes for the nation. As your words have shown, you are aware that the Holy See's presence in the international community is marked by characteristics which correspond to the religious and spiritual nature of the Catholic Church's mission in the world. The Holy See's activity is aimed above all at the safeguarding and promoting the inalienable dignity of every human person, which can only be ensured through the integral development of the individual and the family, and the progress in peace and justice of all peoples. And it is precisely in seeking these all-important objectives that close and cordial relations between the Holy See and those responsible for the well-being of the world's peoples proves to be of mutual benefit and support. In the case of your own country, the Bangladeshi people are imbued with a centuries-old spiritual tradition which has espoused religious freedom and seeks to be non-discriminatory in protecting the various religious groups present in society. If integral development is to be achieved, if the essential dignity of the human person is to be respected, then individuals and peoples must enjoy that freedom which consists in everyone having the duty, and therefore the right, to seek the truth in matters religious and matters of conscience, without constraint or discrimination (cf. *Nostra Aetate*, 3). It follows that those responsible for the destiny of a nation have a duty to safeguard and foster their citizens' inalienable right to religious freedom. In your own history, the fruits borne by policies of respect and tolerance are evident. It is these policies which have also allowed members of the Catholic community to add their own contribution to the social, economic and cultural life of Bangladesh, pursuing a role which they played even before Bangladesh became an independent State. And it is the continuation of these same policies which will enable your Government and people to persevere in their present efforts to face the great challenges of development and progress within the context of the rapidly changing conditions of the entire region. Two elements which are essential for the well-being of every society are the *family* and *education*. The family always remains the nucleus of society, and consequently must be the central focus of efforts aimed at eliminating poverty and at building a just and equitable national community. The family is the greatest resource for sustaining and strengthening the values which are basic to society's stability and progress. At the same time, if public policies are to be truly effective, they must be accompanied by education. For individuals both in the family and in society at large need to be given an awareness and understanding of their rights and responsibilities. Education, certainly, is not only a question of acquiring knowledge and information, but also of gaining a keen sense of the solidarity which should unite individuals, families and peoples. The harmony and tranquillity which all people yearn for and which

the world sorely needs, directly involve this solidarity, and therefore require enlightened attitudes of responsible participation on the part of all sectors of society. Education is the soul of social dynamism, the key to the future, the support of all effective programmes of development. On many occasions I have drawn attention to the moral question of the primacy of the person in matters of economic and political development. As is evident from the unresolved and even increasing difficulties being experienced in some regions of the world, progress is not a straightforward, automatic and limitless process, as though societies were able to advance endlessly towards a perfection of some sort (cf. John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 27). The training and motivation of individuals and groups is an essential condition for promoting the common good. Through numerous educational institutions at every level, the Catholic Church in Bangladesh contributes to forming well-prepared and committed citizens who, in turn, are the great resource on which depends your country's advancement and well-being. I am confident that your Government will continue to guarantee the necessary and lawful conditions of tranquillity and autonomy which make it possible for these institutions to preserve their identity and fulfil their objectives for the good of the whole nation. Co-operation between the State and the Church in the service of the same population will be one of the areas in which your mission will be particularly helpful and constructive. Mr. Ambassador, the presentation of your Letters of Credence brings together the People's Republic of Bangladesh and the Holy See in a renewed commitment to work for closer ties and increased mutual understanding. In this you can be sure of the assistance and co-operation of all the departments of the Roman Curia. May Almighty God sustain you in the fulfilment of your mission, and may his abundant blessings be upon your Government and your people, that they may always act to promote the dignity and freedom of the human

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person.

*\*Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II, vol. XVII, 2 p.816-818. L'Attività della Santa Sede 1994 p. 869-870. L'Osservatore Romano 20.11.1994 p.6. L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly edition in English n.48 p.10 © Copyright 1994 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana*