



# The Holy See

---

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO THE PHILIPPINES,  
PAPUA NEW GUINEA, AUSTRALIA AND SRI LANKA

## FAREWELL CEREMONY

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

*Katunayake International Airport of Colombo (Sri Lanka)*  
*Saturday, 21 January 1995*

*Madam Prime Minister,*  
*Dear Brother Bishops,*  
*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

1. My visit to Sri Lanka has come to an end, and I say farewell with sentiments of deep gratitude to everyone who has taken part in the events of these last two days. I thank Her Excellency the President, and you Madam Prime Minister, the members of the Government, as well as my Brother Bishops, for all that you have done to make my pilgrimage possible. To all the people of Sri Lanka I express my heartfelt thanks for your great kindness and hospitality. As I return to Rome, I will carry with me unforgettable memories of your beautiful Island and its friendly sons and daughters.

I came to Sri Lanka above all to honour Blessed Joseph Vaz, whom Catholics revere for his outstanding charity and his complete devotion to our Lord Jesus Christ and the message of the Gospel. Like a star shining in the Asian sky, this great spiritual guide teaches us many lessons about the goodness of the human person and the nobility of our destiny as human beings. *Father Vaz loved Sri Lanka and its people.* From his place in heaven may he continue to watch over this Nation and its citizens.

2. As I leave Asia I confirm my profound esteem for the *strong religious sense which marks many*

*Asian societies*. I am fully convinced that the time is ripe in human history for the followers of the various religions to seek a new respect for one another. In a world that is increasingly interdependent, there is great need for dialogue and cooperation among believers in order to build the future of the human family on the solid ground of respect for each person's inalienable dignity, equal justice for all, tolerance and solidarity in human relations. All men and women of good will must work together to advance just such a civilization, recognizing the link between genuine democracy, respect for human rights and development. It is my ardent hope that Sri Lanka will continue to pursue this path, which surely is the one most in accord with its history and the genius of its people.

3. I appeal to all Sri Lankans, in the name of our common humanity, *to work for reconciliation and harmony*. I encourage the Government and all other parties involved to persevere in negotiating a just end to the conflict which has marred Sri Lankan life in recent years, to create the conditions for the return of refugees to their homes, and to continue resolutely in their efforts to promote the integral development of Sri Lankan society.

4. We Christians have recently celebrated the great Feast of Christmas, the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is the time when we repeat the angels' hymn: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased!" (Lk. 2:14). Peace is in fact a divine gift, but it is also a task, a challenge, a moral responsibility of the men and women of our time. It has always to be forged step by step. My parting wish for all Sri Lankans is that, like your Manel flower which, no matter its surroundings, opens up and blooms into its full glory in the light of the sun, *true good and true peace will blossom on this beautiful Island because they flourish in the heart of each and every one of you*.

God bless Sri Lanka! May peace be his gift to you!