



# The Holy See

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**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II  
TO H.E. Mr FILIMONE JITOKO,  
NEW AMBASSADOR OF FIJI TO THE HOLY SEE\***

*Thursday, 12 December 1996*

*Mister Ambassador,* It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Vatican and to accept the Letters of Credence by which His Excellency the Right Honourable Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara appoints you Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Fiji to the Holy See. With great joy I recall my Pastoral Visit to your country in 1986, surrounded as I was by the beauty of your homeland and the affection of your people. Reciprocating the President's good wishes, I gladly express my esteem and friendship for all your fellow citizens. Within the community of nations the Holy See's endeavours are founded on the desire of the Catholic Church to defend and promote 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 [8 Dec. 1988]). The Church rejoices when people unite in building a society which respects the dignity and rights of every human being. It is reassuring to know that Fiji is steadfastly committed to safeguarding the equal rights of all its citizens, a principle which is an essential foundation for a solidly free and just society, the overriding purpose of which is to enable its members to achieve full human development. Essential also is a climate of harmony and co-operation, especially between groups of different ethnic origin. As recent world events so tragically demonstrate, whenever intolerance creeps into a nation's life, social harmony is undermined. Among the challenges facing the international community on the threshold of the Third Millennium is that of encouraging the peaceful development of multi-religious and multi-cultural societies. As Your Excellency has pointed out, the goal must be to achieve national unity through respect for diversity. Cultural, religious and ethnic differences within a country should be treasured as gifts which help people to appreciate the divinely-bestowed unity in diversity of the human family. More than ever it is necessary to encourage profound esteem for different traditions through educational programmes which foster mutual enrichment and the pursuit of the common good (cf. John Paul II, *Message for the World Day of Peace 1991*, 7 [8 Dec. 1990]). Such programmes can help people recognize "the moral logic which is built into human life and which makes possible dialogue between individuals and peoples" (John Paul II, *Address for the Fiftieth General Assembly of the United Nations Organization*, 3 [5 Oct. 1995]). *Mister Ambassador,* I thank you for your kind expression of appreciation for the contribution which Catholics have made to the building of a just and peaceful society in your Islands. While the Church always gives priority to her vocation to evangelize, it is also true that her religious mission "produces a function, enlightenment and resources which can be of service in constructing and strengthening the human community in

accordance with the divine law" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 42). The Catholics of Fiji are committed to work for the welfare of society as a whole. This is why I urged them, during my memorable visit to Suva, "to work for a more just society, in which wealth will be more equally divided and in which it will be possible for all to live a life in keeping with their human dignity" (John Paul II, *Homily at the Holy Mass celebrated in Suva (Fiji)*, 7 [21 Nov. 1986]). The freedom of religion which your country enjoys has enabled Catholics to offer their contribution to authentic social progress, especially in the fields of health care, social service and above all education. As you have kindly noted, the Church has been a leader in the field of education, where she is committed not only to providing useful skills but also to developing the capacity of Fijian youth to seek and know the truth, grow in respect for others, work with hope for a new flourishing of the human spirit. You may be assured that the Catholic Church—her priests, religious and laity—will continue to work for your country's well-being by forming the moral conscience of its citizens. As you begin your mission as the Ambassador of the Republic of Fiji to the Holy See, I assure you of the co-operation of the various offices of the Roman Curia. Upon Your Excellency and upon all the people of Fiji, I cordially invoke the blessings of Almighty

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God.

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