



The Holy See

**LETTER OF PAUL VI
TO HIS EXCELLENCY VARAHIGIRI VENKATA GIRI,
PRESIDENT OF INDIA***

*To His Excellency Varahagiri Venkata Giri
President of India*

On the occasion of the centenary celebrations of the birth of Mahatma Gandhi, We send greetings and good wishes, through the kind offices of Your Excellency, to all of India.

Gandhi had a high appreciation of the value of human dignity, and a keen sense of social justice. With warm zeal and a clear vision of the future welfare of his people, he worked tirelessly to achieve his goals, ever instilling in his followers the admirable principle of non-violence.

He strove to make his countrymen conscious of injustices in their social system, and to spread among them a spirit of equality and brotherhood. His efforts and example, even when not entirely successful, have left their mark upon the men of his own and our generation.

One cannot forget Gandhi's profound admiration and esteem for the person of Jesus Christ, Whose Sermon on the Mount greatly influenced his own thought and action. Ever conscious of God's presence, especially in times of difficulty, he realized the value of austerity, silence, fasting, and prayer, the ready acceptance of manual labour, and the giving up of worldly goods. He recognized the place of suffering and sacrifice in human life. His attitude to conjugal chastity enhanced the dignity and integrity of the family.

India is rightly proud of such a leader, and his influence will doubtless continue. May it lead your beloved people, and the peoples of other Nations also, to prize and practise the high ideals of peace and love among men. We trust that these centenary celebrations will recall to men these superior principles and that higher destiny to which we are all directed.

With heartfelt affection for your great Country, We offer prayers for Your Excellency, your Government and people, that on the arduous road of pilgrimage towards our eternal home all may travel with courage and our journey be assisted by abundant heavenly blessings.

From the Vatican, August 22, 1969.

PAULUS PP. VI

**Insegnamenti di Paolo VI, vol. VII, p.1298-1299;*

L'Attività della Santa Sede 1969, p.370-371;

L'Osservatore Romano, 3.10.1969, p.1;

ORa n.41 p.5.