



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER PAUL VI
TO THE NEW AMBASSADOR OF INDIA
TO THE HOLY SEE****

Monday, 12 December 1977

Mr Ambassador,

We thank Your Excellency for the kind words you have spoken. We are grateful for the cordial greetings from the President and the Prime Minister and from the Government and people of India, and as you to transmit our prayerful good wishes for their welfare.

We are happy to receive the distinguished representative of a nation that, as you have recalled, is by tradition respectful of the human right of freedom in seeking God and worshipping him. Only in freedom can a human being direct himself towards the good; only if he makes a knowing and free choice and is not under external constraint is he acting in accordance with his nature. This right has been enshrined in your country's Constitution as one of the fundamental rights of all persons.

The Catholic Church asks no more than is laid down in the Constitution of India, which explicitly guarantees the right to freedom of conscience, the right to profess, practise and propagate religion, and the right of religious groups to manage their own affairs in matters of religion. It is within such a framework that the Church can fulfil the mission for which she exists.

The institutions for religious, charitable and educational purposes which the Church has the right to establish and maintain are intended to serve the people of your country. We know that these institutions are making every effort to fulfil this purpose, not only by answering the call of extraordinary problems, such as have been brought upon the province of Andhra Pradesh through a great natural disaster, but also by responding to the ordinary needs of everyday circumstances.

Individual Catholics also are obliged by their religion to give ready service to the common good.

And we are confident that in India to they have not ignored this obligation but have done their duty as loyal citizens of their country.

In view of these happy relations, as well as for many other reasons, we bid Your Excellency a very hearty welcome. We assure you of the willingness of the Holy See to give you every assistance in your important task as a diplomat. We invoke upon you abundant favours from God, asking him also to bless the highly esteemed authorities of your country and the entire Indian people, for whom we have always had a sincere affection. This affection has increased with our visit to Bombay, which in spite of the years that have passed remains cherished in our memory, and with the contacts we have had with outstanding fellow countrymen of yours who have done us the honour of coming to see us in the Vatican.

*AAS 70 (1978), p.123-124.

Insegnamenti di Paolo VI, vol. XV, p.1192-1193.

L' Osservatore Romano 12-13.12.1977, p.1, 2.

L'Attività della Santa Sede 1977, p.395-396.

ORa n.51 p.4.
