



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. Mr WARNASENA RASAPUTRAM
AMBASSADOR OF THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST REPUBLIC
OF SRI LANKA TO THE HOLY SEE***

Friday, 21 April 1989

Mr Ambassador,

It is my pleasure to offer you a cordial welcome to the Vatican and to accept the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka to the Holy See. I am grateful for the greetings and good wishes expressed on behalf of your President, His Excellency Ranasinghe Premadasa, which I would ask you to reciprocate with the assurance of my prayers for his well-being, for peace in your country and for reconciliation among all its beloved people.

Your Excellency has referred to the good relations existing between your Government and the Holy See. It is my fervent hope that the cooperation and understanding which have characterized our relations in the past will serve to strengthen them even more in the future.

While not proposing a specific mission in the political, economic or social order, the Church extends her religious mission to the various fields in which men and women expend their efforts in search of the relative happiness which is possible in this world, always in line with their Godgiven dignity as persons (Cfr. Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 41). You have mentioned the important contributions which the Catholic Church is making to Sri Lankan society not only in the field of education but also in the various social, cultural and artistic spheres. Despite her limited resources, the Church in Sri Lanka is actively and fruitfully engaged in these areas, as well as in the promotion of family values. She fosters respect for the inalienable dignity of individuals and pursues the human development of peoples through the principles of her social doctrine. These principles do not form a political system or ideology, but rather are the result of the Church's careful reflection on the complex realities and problems of human existence in the light of her faith

and tradition 8Cfr. *ibid.* 41).

I am pleased to acknowledge, Mr Ambassador, your appreciation of the Holy See's efforts to build peace both within the social and civil life of a given nation as well as in the international community. The Holy See is ever mindful that peace cannot be reduced solely to maintaining a balance of power, but involves a dynamic process which depends on many conditions and factors. Of singular importance among the conditions for peace is the existence of a spirit of mutual acceptance and respect among the various ethnic groups within a country. I dealt with this theme in my Message for this year's World Day of Peace. There I stated two principles which form the necessary basis for all social life. "The first of these principles is the inalienable dignity of every human person, irrespective of racial, ethnic, cultural or national origin, or religious belief... And the second principle concerns the fundamental unity of the human race, which takes its origin from God, the Creator" (Eiusdem *Nuntius ob diem ad pacem fovendam dicatum pro a. D. 1989*, 3, die 8 dec. 1988: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, XI, 3 [1988] 1788). With these principles as a foundation, the process of peace requires that the whole of humanity should strive to eliminate attitudes of prejudice and discrimination. This is an especially urgent task where such attitudes have been embodied in legislative policies.

The Holy See follows with great concern trends towards violence and terrorism within your country. I take this occasion to express my fervent hope for reconciliation through dialogue and negotiation as the obligatory path to a just resolution of the complex problems which obstruct peace in Sri Lanka. Acts of terrorism are crimes against humanity, and it is clear that "to strike blindly, kill innocent people or carry out bloody reprisals does not help a just evaluation of the claims advanced by the minorities for whom the terrorists claim to act!" (Eiusdem *Nuntius ob diem ad pacem fovendam dicatum pro a. D. 1989*, 3, die 8 dec. 1988: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, XI, 3 [1988] 1788). Reconciliation through justice and with respect for the legitimate aspirations of all parties involved is the only acceptable course of action for bringing about a peaceful resolution of the present hostilities.

As you assume your new responsibilities, Mr Ambassador, I offer you my good wishes for the successful fulfilment of your mission. I take this opportunity to assure you of the Holy See's collaboration. Upon Your Excellency, your President and the people of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka I invoke the abundant blessings of Almighty God.

*AAS 81 (1989), p. 11949-1150.

Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II, vol. XII, 1 pp. 890-892.

L'Attività della Santa Sede 1989 pp. 276-277.

L'Osservatore Romano 22.4. 1989 p.4.

L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English n.19 p.8.

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