



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. Mr OSCAR S. VILLADOLID
NEW AMBASSADOR OF THE PHILIPPINES TO THE HOLY SEE***

Saturday, 18 May 1991

Mr Ambassador,

1. I am pleased to welcome you to the Vatican as you present the Letters of Credence appointing you Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of the Philippines to the Holy See. In this position it will be your task to contribute to strengthening still further the close ties which already exist between your country and the Holy See; ties which reflect a relationship which goes back almost five hundred years to the time when the Christian faith was first preached in the Philippine archipelago and which have a solid basis in our shared views on many issues of international relations, our commitment to the promotion of justice at every level of society, and the fostering of peace in the world. I thank you for the greetings you have conveyed from President Corazon Aquino, and I would ask you to assure Her Excellency of my earnest prayers for the well-being of all Filipinos.

2. One of the principal concerns of my Pontificate in relation to the international community has been to draw attention to the ever increasing imbalance between the countries of the so-called "North" and those of the "South"; that is, to the great material distance which separates developed countries from developing ones. As you are aware, the Church's assessment of this imbalance does not spring from economic or political interests; rather the Church approaches this question in the light of her religious mission, and therefore from an essentially ethical and moral point of view.

Since the decline of the ideological contrasts which have divided the world for most of this century, the asymmetry between rich and poor nations is now certainly the most threatening source of conflict among peoples. In my New Year Address to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, I again turned to this theme, in the hope that the leaders of nations will take a far-seeing and

morally responsible attitude in responding to the frustration of millions of our brothers and sisters trapped in situations of material or cultural deprivation (Cfr. Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Ad repraesentantes Nationum apud Sanctam Sedem Legatos*, 9, die 12 ian. 1991: vide *supra*, pp. 92 s).

3. In order to prevent this imbalance between the developed and developing societies from remaining a chronic source of tension, the international community must make adequate adjustments in its economic and social systems and priorities. In particular it must set about resolving the problem of the foreign indebtedness of the countries least able to meet the demand being placed upon them (Cfr. *ibid*). The seriousness of the situation cannot be ignored. On the most immediate level, urgent steps are required to help the millions whose very existence is threatened by famine, homelessness and violence. On a more general but no less pressing level, a new attitude is needed so as to change the prevailing order in which a small sector of the human family uses a disproportionate part of the earth's resources and available energies without a fair return of experience, technology and the actual material benefits of development to the rest, by far the greater part of the one human race. This is not to criticize the progress made by the more developed nations through hard work and enterprise. Not is it to ignore the responsibility of the developing nations in promoting their own growth through wise policies and sustained effort. It is to recognize, as I wrote in my recent Encyclical "Centesimus Annus", that there exists "a growing inability to situate particular interests within the framework of a coherent vision of the common good" (Ioannis Pauli PP. II Centesimus Annus, 47).

A proper concept of the common good is what is often lacking, not only on the theoretical level but also on the practical level of nation-building and of working for a just order in economic and political relations. The common good "is not simply the sum total of particular interests; rather it involves an assessment and integration of those interests on the basis of a balanced hierarchy of values; ultimately, it demands a correct understanding of the dignity and rights of the person" (*Ibid*).

4. In this year, which the Church is dedicating to spreading knowledge of her Social Doctrine, I cannot fail to emphasize the social purpose of all power and wealth, and the duty to use these realities for the common good. It is surely not beyond possibility that in many countries— including the Philippines— there might be established a new forum of solidarity, a *social pact* as it were, between those responsible for public life, those who control the economy, those engaged in education and scientific and technological development, and other forces within society; a pact in which all would agree to work for improved conditions, but in a way that would benefit ever greater numbers of their fellow citizens by educating them for increased participation in economic and civic life. For such an effort to be practicable, public authorities would have to show that they were genuinely at the service of their communities; business leaders would have to harmonize the need for capital growth and profit with the demands of justice and the creation of a community of work respectful of the personality and creativity of its members; those who educate and those who

create public opinion would have to promote and uphold a vision of life in which the transcendent dignity of every person is the criterion of judgment and action. In essence, all would have to be convinced that a nation, as a community of persons, must be built on a solid ethical and moral base, with each member sharing a sense of responsibility for the well-being of all.

5. Your nation is undergoing a series of profound transformations, and Your Excellency has referred to the positive efforts being made by your people and Government to meet the challenges involved. You are aware that the Church is a wise and effective partner in the task of building a society which is deeply respectful of human dignity and firmly established on a solid foundation of social justice. The Church in fact is never a merely passive observer of the human scene. Her duty to communicate God's merciful love embraces individuals, families and groups at every social level. She has a special call to serve the poor, for they have greater and more immediate needs. But no one is excluded from her concern, and I am certain that in your country this fact is well known and appreciated.

On numerous occasions I have had the opportunity to reflect with the Bishops of the Philippines on the circumstances of their ministry. They are deeply committed to serving the best interests of their people through the exercise of their specific role as spiritual guides and teachers and through the immense network of educational, social and charitable works which have sprung from the evangelical command to love one's neighbor as oneself. The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines, to which Your Excellency has referred and in which you personally took part, gave voice to the Bishops' desire to prepare the Catholic community better for the many challenges it is facing.

6. Through their teaching and evangelizing activities, the Pastors of the Church strive in a particular way to educate consciences to the objective demands of justice and solidarity which flow from our human dignity. While they have full confidence in the capabilities and goodness of their people and give due recognition to the many positive aspects of Filipino society, they are also concerned about what appears to be a decline of certain fundamental values. They also note social imbalances which in some cases lead to a loss of trust in political and public institutions and even to violence (Cfr. Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Allocutio ad quosdam Insularum Philippinarum episcopos*, 2, die 18 sept. 1990: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, XIII, 2 [1990] 638 s). It is my ardent hope, Mr Ambassador, that without a blurring of their respective roles the Church and the public authorities of the Philippines will continue to cooperate in fostering the common good.

May God abundantly bless the Filipino people in the construction of a more equitable, just and caring society. May his protection be with you, Mr Ambassador, in the fulfillment of your noble mission!

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