



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE NEW AMBASSADOR OF THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST
REPUBLIC OF SRI LANKA TO THE HOLY SEE***

Thursday, 24 June 1982

Mr Ambassador,

With pleasure I receive you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. I thank you for conveying to me the greetings of His Excellency President J. R. Jayewardene, and I would ask you to assure him of my sincere good wishes and of my prayers for him and for all the people of Sri Lanka.

Christianity, as Your Excellency has remarked, came early to your country. There is a tradition that knowledge of Christ was brought by Thomas himself, one of the twelve appointed by Jesus to be with him and to be sent out to preach. Today the members of the Catholic Church in Sri Lanka, deeply conscious of the centuries-old connection between their faith and their native land, are proud to play their part in promoting their country's welfare and development.

The Holy See has high regard for the many treasures of intellectual culture and moral wisdom enshrined in the heritage of all elements of the Sri Lankan population. It appreciates the declared intention of the civil authorities to "strive to create the economic and social climate necessary for permitting people of all faiths to make their religious principles a living reality".

Sri Lanka has since independence played a notable part in the effort to reduce international tension and to build understanding and cooperation between States, especially between those that possess less material wealth. This efforts is of the highest importance for the future of mankind. Mankind needs peace. But peace is stable and genuine only if the material and spiritual needs of individuals and peoples are respected and cared for.

Human dignity requires, at the least, certain minimum standards in such necessities as food, clothing and housing. Efforts must therefore be directed at eliminating poverty, wherever it is found. This calls for good will and openness of heart on the part of people both within the country concerned and in other countries also. In such situations, selfishness is truly inhuman. The Catholic Church endeavours to awaken consciences to the demands of human solidarity and supernatural charity. She tries, to the extent that she is able and in the ways that are proper to her, to relieve want, to bring healing to the sick and suffering and to provide an education that will enlighten and uplift.

But man does not live by bread alone. Concentration on material matters to the neglect of the higher realities produces spiritual atrophy. Human beings must be able to develop integrally, to grow fully in accordance with their conscience and faith. They need to be able to establish and strengthen their relationship with the transcendent, which is more solid and lasting than this changing world with its essential inadequacy. In other words, they need to be able to direct themselves to God, who alone can give meaning to their lives and satisfy their hope and their longing for love.

The Catholic Church wishes to make her own specific contribution to man's welfare in all these respects, and she hopes to find everywhere willing agreement and active cooperation. In particular, the Catholic Church in Sri Lanka wishes to serve the country by being an agent of peace and reconciliation, an advocate of understanding and a builder of harmony.

I express once more my warm respect and affection for all the people of Sri Lanka and I pray God to bless them and their leaders. The Holy See welcomes Your Excellency and willingly offers you its aid in fulfilling your high mission in your country's service, and I assure you of my personal good wishes and prayers for its success.

*AAS 74 (1982), p.1014-1015.

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