



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. MRS HENRIETTA TAMBUNTING DE VILLA
NEW AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
TO THE HOLY SEE***

Tuesday, 9 July 1996

Your Excellency,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the Vatican and accept the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of the Philippines to the Holy See. I am grateful for the greetings His Excellency President Fidel Ramos, and the Government and people your country; may I request you to convey my own good wishes and to assure them all my esteem and affection for your nation. Your presence here today evokes strong and cherished memories my most recent Pastoral Visit to Manila and the celebration there of the [10th World Youth Day](#), in which you personally were deeply involved. On that occasion I was able to witness once again the faith, resilience and vitality of the Filipino people, who remain undaunted, despite frequent setbacks resulting from natural calamities or connected with economic and social factors.

At this time, Filipinos are recalling the historical events and the memory of the patriots who initiated a movement which found its fulfilment, after the horrors and destruction of the Second World War, in the independence of your nation. This is the 50th anniversary of that fundamental moment of your history, and I offer my sincere congratulations and encourage the Government and people to continue to hold in high esteem the ideals of justice, civic pride and social solidarity which make a society stable and capable of serving the needs of its members.

Southeast Asia is living through a period of remarkable growth and development, and your Government is endeavouring to secure such progress also for the Philippines. I am confident that every effort will be made to ensure that the benefits derived from such development are equitably

shared by all, and in particular that they be used to help the disadvantaged, so that all Filipinos may share in building "a nation resolutely set on the path of genuine and integral development, and fully committed to the well-being of all its citizens, with special concern for the weakest" (Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Adventus in urbem Manilam allocutio*, 2, die 12 ian. 1995: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, XVIII, 1 (1995) 86). It is essential that such advances be matched by a deepening appreciation of spiritual values without which no genuine human development is possible.

In your country an Asian culture and way of life have met and profoundly assimilated the Christian message and tradition. The values derived from the Gospel inspire Christians, and indeed many other men and women of goodwill, to foster a more widespread awareness of the fundamental rights which ensue from the inalienable dignity of every human being. The Philippines have a distinguished record of caring for the weak and more vulnerable, and of generous hospitality towards those who have over the centuries sought refuge in your country. More recently collaboration between the State and the Church has been of great benefit to such people and I urge all involved to continue their efforts to find just solutions to the remaining problems.

Throughout the world, and in the Asia-Pacific region especially, there is the growing conviction that more must be done to protect children from abuse and exploitation of any kind. Governments need to intervene strongly, with all the force of law, against those who harm and scandalize the most defenseless among us. Measures which contribute to this end are to be welcomed, and co-operation at the international level to secure this and to alleviate child poverty - which is frequently the key factor in the propagation of such evils - is to be encouraged.

Many Filipinos must still work abroad in order to provide for their families at home. Such Overseas Contract Workers deserve support and protection. In Rome, as elsewhere, the Church is striving to accompany such people pastorally and to offer them the encouragement needed for perseverance in the Christian life and in their own best traditions, despite the many pressures to which they are subject and the daily problems they must face.

Since the first evangelization of the Philippines the Church has made an essential contribution to the progress of the nation. As I said upon my arrival in Manila last January, "the Church and the political community work on different levels and are mutually independent, but they serve the same human beings. In that service there is ample room for dialogue, co-operation and mutual support" (Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Adventus in urbem Manilam allocutio*, 5, die 12 ian. 1995: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, XVIII, 1 (1995) 87). As there was a religious dimension to the birth of your nation, so now, 50 years after independence, the Church seeks to co-operate with the State in safeguarding everything that is wholesome and worthy of praise in society. The family and married life have a special place within Filipino culture and tradition. Indeed, Filipinos have the highest esteem for the family as the first and vital cell of society, and the source of its cohesion. As I wrote in the Apostolic Exhortation "[Familiaris Consortio](#)": "The family has vital and organic links

with society, since it is its foundation and nourishes it continually through its role of service to life: it is from the family that citizens come to birth and it is within the family that they find the first school of the social virtues that are the animating principle of the existence and development society itself" (Ioannis Pauli PP. II Familiaris Consortio, 42). Every effort must be made to strengthen and protect the family, and to ensure the conditions in which it can fulfil its inherent God-given mission in society. Moreover today, when the sacredness all human life from conception to natural death is being obscured in the minds many, it is most important that demographic and social problems, which call for responsible and effective attention from national and international bodies, not be left open to false and deceptive solutions, opposed to the truth and the good of persons and nations (Eiusdem Evangelium Vitae, 4).

On another level, I am pleased to acknowledge that the long quest for peace in your country has made considerable progress in recent years. The task is not an easy one, rendered more difficult in part by the complexity of the nation's social fabric, but it is an undertaking requiring prudence and good will.

Your Excellency, I have every confidence that throughout the duration of your mission the friendship and understanding which have ever distinguished relations between the Philippines and the Holy See will prosper, and I wish to assure you the willing co-operation the various offices of the Roman Curia, which you already have some experience as a Member the Pontifical Council for the Laity. Upon yourself and upon the entire Filipino nation I invoke Almighty God's abundant blessings.

**Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II, vol. XIX, 2 p.69-72.*

L'Osservatore Romano 10.7. 1996 p.5.

L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly edition in English. 29 p.6.

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