



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. Mr. SUKH-OCHIR BOLD,
NEW AMBASSADOR OF MONGOLIA
ACCREDITED TO THE HOLY SEE***

Thursday, 17 December 1998

Mr. Ambassador,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the Vatican for the presentation of the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Mongolia to the Holy See. I am grateful for the greetings which you bring from President Natsagiin Bagabandi, and I ask you kindly to convey to him and the Government my own good wishes together with the assurance of my prayers for the progress, peace and prosperity of the nation. Your presence here today is a further sign of the friendship and cooperation which continue to grow between your country and the Holy See since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1992. Mongolia has made significant advances in recent years, taking its place in the world community and committing itself to policies of peace and friendship among nations. Much effort has been devoted to bringing about a more representative and democratic form of government, particularly through the ratification of the new Constitution and the legal recognition and protection of human rights. Essential to the national good is the creation of a healthy political community which is the necessary condition and sure guarantee of the development of the individual and society. Such a community finds expression in the free and responsible participation of all citizens in public affairs, in the rule of law and in respect for and promotion of human rights (cf. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 44). Economic reform has also been a major concern, involving a difficult transition from the centrally-planned economy of the past to one which, by leaving more room for individual creativity and initiative, is more subject to the fluctuations of market forces. As with any major change, this reform involves both opportunities and risks. While offering the possibility of promoting new contacts with other nations and of increasing national prosperity, it can also lead to the widening of the gap between rich and poor. One of the significant challenges facing your country in this new phase is to ensure that everyone has a chance to benefit and that increased wealth does not have adverse effects on the needy and indigent. Indeed, eliminating poverty and correcting situations which give rise to it or perpetuate it must be priorities for everyone, at both the national and the international levels (*Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace 1998*, No. 5). Although progress may require certain structural reforms, the human person must ever be at the heart of all development projects. Indeed, the good of nations hinges on the promotion of an authentic and integral human

development which “cannot consist in the simple accumulation of wealth and in the greater availability of goods and services, if this is gained at the expense of the development of the masses, and without due consideration for the social, cultural and spiritual dimensions of the human being” (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 9). Your country’s precious cultural heritage, which includes its strong social bonds, its ancient customs and spiritual traditions, has an important role to play in promoting the common good and ensuring authentic progress. By drawing on this patrimony and bringing about those conditions which lead to the full personal development of all citizens, a great investment is made in the future of society and in its harmonious advancement. In this regard, your country rightly recognizes the importance of education and is currently devoting much attention to increasing the rate of literacy and broadening access to education. Young people need to be taught their cultural, moral and spiritual heritage. This enables them to think in a mature and informed way, to understand what is essential in life and to discover true wisdom. Educators must therefore be engaged in the vital task of imparting moral and civic values to their students, instilling in them a lively sense of rights and duties. The implementation of such a vision of education can only be of benefit to a nation, helping to bring about its future development in harmony, and not in discontinuity, with the riches of its heritage, while at the same time preserving and strengthening a social fabric grounded in sound moral principles. You mention your Government’s desire to increase cultural, educational and humanitarian cooperation with the Holy See and I take this opportunity to express my gratitude for the openness which the political authorities show towards the Catholic community in Mongolia. Although this community is numerically small, its members are committed to playing an active role in meeting the challenges which the development of society continues to present. Christians seek no special privileges but only the freedom to contribute to the spiritual and material progress of their fellow citizens and to practise their faith openly and peacefully. Catholic missionaries themselves, on principle, are respectful of Mongolia’s spiritual and cultural traditions in their involvement in various social and humanitarian projects which contribute to the common good. It is my ardent hope that their work will continue in a climate of mutual understanding and cooperation with Government and people. Mr Ambassador, I am confident that in the fulfilment of your mission you will contribute all your personal qualities and skills to further strengthening the ties of friendship already existing between Mongolia and the Holy See. I assure you that the various departments of the Roman Curia will always be willing to assist you as you carry out your duties. I invoke abundant divine blessings upon Your Excellency and your country.

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