



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE NEW AMBASSADOR OF THE KINGDOM
OF THAILAND TO THE HOLY SEE***

Friday, 17 May 2002

Mr Ambassador,

It is a pleasure for me to accept the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of Thailand to the Holy See. I am especially grateful for the good wishes which you bring from His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej and from the Government and people of your country. I gladly reciprocate with heartfelt prayers for the well-being and prosperity of the nation. Your presence recalls the long tradition of friendship, goodwill and cooperation between Thailand and the Holy See, made possible by the freedom-loving spirit of your people and their leaders since the Christian presence became established there in the seventeenth century. With esteem for that great tradition I welcome you today to the Vatican.

Thailand and the Holy See share many common views and objectives in the international forum; chief among which is love of peace, a desire to work for understanding and cooperation among the nations of the world, so that all peoples may be able to pursue in freedom and security their full human and spiritual development. Diplomacy has a fundamental role to play in reaching these goals. By helping to break down barriers of distrust and suspicion, by increasing mutual knowledge and by promoting the principle of respect for the dignity of every person, independently of ethnic, social or religious origin, diplomacy serves the cause of brotherhood and peace. This cause is not an easy one to serve. It is always exposed to danger, as witnessed to even recently by tensions and conflicts in various parts of the world. We must never give up the effort to sow the seeds of justice and solidarity, which are basic to constructive relations between countries and within each country.

Mr Ambassador, as the diplomatic representative of your country to the Holy See, you are aware

that your mission is not defined by commercial, military or political interests. Rather, the Holy See's concerns are focused on the values which give meaning to people's efforts to build a world in which our human and spiritual destiny can be achieved. In the service of this cause each people and nation has a duty and an opportunity to contribute its own special talent and cultural heritage. Thailand has a wealth of cultural and spiritual traditions to offer.

In this regard, the age-old Thai legacy of respect for religious freedom, which enshrines respect for the dignity of the human person in its most sacred dimension, is a value to be cherished and defended. This respect must survive and grow, so that Thailand may continue to represent a convincing voice raised in favour of harmony and peace in the international community. Because freedom of conscience and of religious belief and practice touch upon the innermost recesses of personality, they are the cornerstone of all other rights and freedoms.

Your Excellency has commented on the long-standing presence of the Catholic community in Thailand and noted the many contributions made by its members in various fields of service to the people. In this the Church is being true to her biblical vision of man, created in the image and likeness of God (cf. *Gen 1:28*), and therefore endowed with an inalienable dignity, the promotion of which ought to be the object of society's efforts. The Church wishes to be a partner with all people of good will, especially the public authorities, in upholding the values which constitute and enhance this unique dignity.

Mr Ambassador, I wish you every happiness and success as you assume your responsibilities as your country's Representative to the Holy See, and I assure you of the cooperation of the various Offices of the Roman Curia. I prayerfully invoke abundant divine blessings upon you and all your fellow-citizens.

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