



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO H.E. Mr. SURESH PRASAD PRADHAN
AMBASSADOR OF THE FEDERAL DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF NEPAL
TO THE HOLY SEE***

*Clementine Hall
Thursday, 16 December 2010*

Mr Ambassador,

In welcoming you to the Vatican and accepting your Letters of Credence as Ambassador of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal to the Holy See, I wish to express my satisfaction at the cordial relations which we continue to enjoy. I am grateful to you for transmitting the courteous greeting of your President, Mr Ram Baran Yadav, and in return I would ask you kindly to convey my own good wishes to him and to all the people of the Federal Democratic Republic.

Recent years have seen much change in your nation as Nepal's leaders have sought to chart a new political course for the benefit of her people. In this regard, among the most important tasks is the drafting of a new Constitution. Ensuring the legal guarantees of civil and political rights, as well as guaranteeing those of an economic, social and cultural nature, is surely one of the most delicate and demanding undertakings in any nation's political life. For this reason, the Holy See is hopeful that once present difficulties are overcome, the Constituent Assembly will be able to complete its work and contribute in this way to ensuring a stable, harmonious and prosperous future.

The Holy See is pleased to note the expressions of commitment to democratic ideals and norms found in the interim political arrangements currently in force in your country. These include the wish to promote competitive multi-party democracy, civil liberties and fundamental human rights, adult enfranchisement, periodic elections, press freedom, an independent judiciary and the rule of law. It is acknowledged that much still needs to be done to consolidate these good intentions, but

the public expression of such a commitment by Nepal's leaders already bodes well.

As Your Excellency is aware, of the over one million Christians in your country, the Catholic Church numbers very few souls and yet, through her institutions, she has sought to make a significant contribution to the well-being of all your citizens. The Church's charitable agency *Caritas* runs a variety of projects in poorer areas and takes care of refugees. Spurred by the love of Jesus Christ (cf. *2 Cor* 5:14-15), the Church is always ready and willing to do whatever she can to help those in distress, irrespective of their race, colour or creed.

While the Catholic Church can trace her first contacts with Nepal back to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, over the past seventy years she has been particularly active in the service of the people through her hospitals, welfare organizations and schools. I am pleased to note the freedom in which these important institutions operate and the respect in which they are held. It is greatly to be hoped that your Government will continue to be supportive of the Church's presence in health and education and ensure that human rights in general and religious freedom in particular are duly respected.

In contrast to the Nepalese people's long tradition of tolerance, a few regrettable incidents of violence against the lives of Catholics have occurred in recent years, as well as damage to church property. Let me express the hope that a spirit of tolerance will prevail, and that cooperation for the general good and reconciliation through dialogue will be strengthened and will continue to mark the brotherly relations between Nepalese Catholics and their fellow citizens of other religions.

Finally, Mr Ambassador, I am confident that the cordial relations already existing between the Holy See and Nepal will do much to promote such fraternity, respect and dialogue. In offering my good wishes at the beginning of your mission as Ambassador to the Holy See, I assure you of the readiness of the Roman Curia to assist you in your high office. Upon you and upon all the people of Nepal I invoke an abundance of divine blessings.

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