



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. Mr. SOO SOOBIAH,
AMBASSADOR OF MAURITIUS ACCREDITED TO THE HOLY SEE***

Monday, 12 December 1988

Mr Ambassador,

I am pleased to offer Your Excellency a cordial welcome as you present the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Mauritius to the Holy See. The kind expression of greetings and good wishes which you have conveyed to me on behalf of His Excellency the Governor-General, the Prime Minister and the people of Mauritius are much appreciated. I readily reciprocate with the assurance of my own good wishes and continued prayers for the harmony and well-being of all your fellowcitizens.

It is with satisfaction that I acknowledge your reference to the Pastoral Visits which have been a part of my ministry during the years of my Pontificate. As you know, my journeys to the various countries are primarily visits of the Bishop of Rome, as head of the Catholic Church, to the Catholic communities throughout the world. They have enabled me to bear witness before the nations to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to confirm the faith of the Church's members and to serve the cause of Christian unity. At the same time, they have provided me with the opportunity of sharing in the legitimate hopes of peoples, in their sufferings and anxieties, in their practical efforts to promote peace and justice and the defence of human rights.

Your Excellency has mentioned the important role which religion plays in the life of the Mauritian people, and you have referred to the fact that your Government, in acknowledging the religious traditions of the people, has incorporated necessary safeguards in the Constitution to protect their religious freedom. Indeed, for true religious freedom to exist it is necessary that people, both individually and in association with each other, be able to pursue the truth and to profess and

celebrate their religious convictions openly – always of course with respect for the common good. They should be able to communicate freely with other religious groups, both at home and abroad, and be enabled to transmit their beliefs to each new generation through appropriate forms of religious education. All of these rights should be recognized and confirmed by civil law so that no coercion by individuals, social groups or any human power be allowed to undermine that most fundamental of all freedoms, freedom of conscience and belief.

The Church is always eager to encourage closer bonds of trust and goodwill among the ethnic, social and religious groups of any country. Governments too have a major role to play in fostering this kind of harmony, especially by promoting and defending the dignity and rights of all citizens without discrimination. Apart from supporting economic, social and scientific development, Governments ensure the genuine well-being of their citizens by allowing for programmes in religious and moral education, respect for life and for transcendent values which are in keeping with the beliefs of their people. I encourage your Government in these endeavours and I know that the Catholic Church in Mauritius does not fail to make its own contribution in order to help in the construction of a harmonious society, respectful of the spiritual dimension of man. In so doing, the Church is convinced that the dialogue between the various components of society will be ever more fruitful, since it is based on the equal dignity of every human person.

I am pleased to acknowledge, Mr Ambassador, that your Government pursues a policy of international peace and that it strives to keep the Indian Ocean a zone of peace for the safety and welfare of all the countries of the region. This is admirably embodied in your country's pledge to work for the liberty and progress of all peoples.

I wish to express once again my appreciation of your Government's willingness to welcome me for a Pastoral Visit to Mauritius. I am looking forward to the possibility of fulfilling at an early date my desire to be present among the Catholic community of your nation, which I have wished to honour by calling to the College of Cardinals the Bishop of Port Louis, my dear and esteemed brother Jean Margéot. It will be my pleasure also to meet the people of Mauritius and so come to know and experience their noble human qualities.

At the outset of your mission, Mr Ambassador, I assure you of the cooperation of the Holy See in carrying out your responsibilities. It is my hope to further in every possible way the friendship and goodwill which characterize the diplomatic relations that exist between Mauritius and the Holy See. Upon Your Excellency, the Government and people of Mauritius I invoke God's abundant blessings of peace and prosperity.

*AAS 81 (1989), p. 777-778.

L'Attività della Santa Sede 1988 pp. 1127-1128.

L'Osservatore Romano 13.12.1988 p.7.

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