



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. Mr. HARUN-UR RASHID,
THE AMBASSADOR OF BANGLADESH TO THE HOLY SEE***

Thursday, 10 November 1988

Mr Ambassador,

It is my pleasure to welcome you today and to accept the Letters accrediting you as the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. I hasten to express my gratitude for the greetings and good wishes which you have conveyed to me from your President, His Excellency Hussain Muhammad Ershad, and I would ask you to assure him of my own good wishes and continued prayers to the Most High God for his well-being and that of all the people of Bangladesh. In particular I wish to manifest at this time my prayerful concern for and solidarity with the victims of the recent floods which have caused such devastation in your country.

In welcoming you, Mr. Ambassador, I recall my visit to your homeland in 1986. It was a joy for me to experience your warm hospitality and to encounter the cultural wealth of your people, whose long history has been enriched by the contributions of many linguistic, cultural and religious traditions. I came to your country "as a pilgrim to the ' soul ' of the Bangladesh people" and as "a brother in our common humanity; a brother in our adoration of the one God, living and enduring, merciful and all-powerful, who has made heaven and earth, and has spoken to all men; a brother in human solidarity, listening to the voice of humanity crying out all over the world for dignity, justice and peace".

My visit had above all a religious significance. I wished to confirm my brothers and sisters of the Catholic Church in their faith and I was eager to encourage respect and esteem between all your people, whether they be Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist or Christian. And I repeat today my fervent hope that the followers of the various religious traditions present in your country will continue to live in harmony while seeking an ever greater understanding and appreciation of one another.

You have mentioned the importance of the spiritual dimension of your people's national ethos and your Government's protection of and respect for the religious freedom of the Bangladesh people. I wish to underline that the guarantee of an individual's freedom to profess his or her religious convictions serves to strengthen a people's moral integrity and thus favour a more just society at the service of the common good. As I said in my Message for this year's World Day of Peace: "By leading people to a new understanding of their human condition, religious faith brings people, through a sincere gift of themselves, to a complete fellowship with other human beings. Faith brings people together and unites them, makes them see others as their brothers and sisters; it makes them more attentive, more responsible, more generous in their commitment to the common good".

Mr Ambassador, you have referred to the recent measures which have been taken to further the democratic aspirations of your people. I wish to offer my encouragement to every initiative which ensures fundamental freedoms. It is the teaching of the Second Vatican Council that all citizens should have a simultaneous right and duty "to participate freely and actively in establishing the constitutional bases of a political community, governing the state, determining the scope and purpose of various institutions, and choosing leaders".

I thank Your Excellency for your kind acknowledgment of the Holy See's many endeavours on behalf of peace and development. You have made reference specifically to its dedication to the task of universal disarmament, of achieving greater understanding and cooperation between the different world religions and of resolving the problems which currently afflict many nations of the world. In finding solutions to these and other concerns of the world community, the only path to follow so that justice and peace may prevail is the road of mutual respect, universal brotherhood and integral development. Political, economic, social and cultural relations and systems must be imbued with the values of solidarity and dialogue. And there is the need for a greater international ordering which will watch over the common good of all peoples.

I have noted, Mr Ambassador, your affirmation of the warm and cordial relations which exist between your Government and the Holy See. It is my hope that the collaboration which has always characterized our diplomatic relations will serve to further strengthen and develop those bonds of friendship.

Your Excellency can be confident of the Holy See's readiness to assist you in the fulfilment of your diplomatic mission. As you take up your duties, I offer you my good wishes and the assurance of my prayers for the successful and happy accomplishment of your responsibilities. Upon yourself and upon all the people of Bangladesh I invoke the blessing of the Most High God.

*AAS 81 (1989), p. 637-639.

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