



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO FIVE NEW AMBASSADORS
ACCREDITED TO THE HOLY SEE***

Thursday, 18 December 1997

Your Excellencies,

1. I am pleased to welcome you to the Eternal City on the occasion of the presentation of the Letters accrediting you to the Holy See as Ambassadors Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of your respective countries: Benin, Eritrea, Norway, Sri Lanka and Togo. On this occasion, I willingly renew the expression of my esteem and friendship for the authorities of your nations and all your compatriots. Touched by the cordial messages you have conveyed to me from your heads of State, I would be grateful if you would reciprocate my respectful greetings and warm wishes for them and for their lofty mission in the service of their fellow citizens.

2. To respond to the peoples' legitimate hopes and aspirations for peace and material and spiritual well-being, it is right to recall the importance of dialogue within the national communities and between countries, dialogue which is the way of reason and an essential aspect of diplomatic life. In this spirit, it is important to support the nations which have to develop further their democratic life, so as to enable the greatest possible number to take part in public life. I likewise invite those who have a role in the concert of nations to do all they can to encourage communication between peoples and to urge political and economic leaders to continue on the path of international co-operation. It is clear - as history has frequently shown - that, in the long-run, violence or force never resolves situations of conflict. On the contrary, they only reinforce every form of particularism.

3. At the end of the Special Assembly for America of the Synod of Bishops which has just concluded in Rome, the Pastors frequently echoed the voice of the poor; with them, in my wishes, I cannot but call for a renewed commitment by the international community for those countries that must continue to fight even harder against poverty, the source of many evils for persons and peoples, including in particular the scourges of drugs and delinquency in every form. With the approach of the third millennium, a

greater awareness is also desirable, in order to encourage respect for all individuals, especially children, who do not always have the opportunity to receive the education to which they have a right, who are the object of many forms of exploitation and are sometimes obliged to work in degrading conditions. As diplomats, I am certain that you are particularly sensitive to these aspects of social life.

4. At the time when you are beginning your mission, which will enable you to have a deeper knowledge of the life and activity of the Apostolic See, I offer you my best wishes and I invoke an abundance of divine blessings upon your persons, your families, your coworkers and the nations you represent.

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