



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. Mr Irawan Abidin,
AMBASSADOR OF INDONESIA TO THE HOLY SEE****

Monday, 23 December 1996

Mr Ambassador,

With sincere goodwill I welcome you to the Vatican and accept the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Indonesia to the Holy See. I am grateful for the greetings which you convey from His Excellency President Soeharto and on behalf of your Government and people, and I gladly reciprocate with good wishes for your dynamic country, which I had the joy of visiting in 1989, as a friend to all Indonesians, whose warm hospitality I experienced at every step.

Your Excellency has identified the causes of peace, social justice, mutual respect and generous co-operation between peoples, and a just and peaceful international order as areas about which both your country and the Holy See are concerned, and in which they can cooperate in different ways. A close look at the situation in many parts of the world shows how much still needs to be done to build peace on solid foundations. That is why the Holy See rejoices when countries take an active part in bilateral and multilateral negotiations aimed at resolving tensions or at consolidating already existing forms of international agreement and co-operation. Indonesia's initiatives and efforts to bring about a peaceful settlement of situations of conflict and tension in neighbouring countries of South-East Asia do you much honour.

Likewise, Indonesia is rightly proud of the results it has so far attained in its progress as a nation. It is becoming more and more clear that the growth of a nation cannot be understood merely as material progress. On the contrary, it must aim at people's integral good and advancement, and it necessarily involves an ethical and moral view of rights and duties in relation to society. It demands that everyone should share in the benefits of development, and that no group should be left on the margins of society by reason of the bias or self-interest of other groups.

As you have indicated, Indonesia faces the never-ending task of fostering harmony and stability among the many

different ethnic and cultural groups present in your islands, through a system of legal and political structures wholly imbued with respect for the best traditions of your peoples. I pray that the problems which inevitably accompany such efforts will always be solved by means of a dialogue which seeks a clear understanding of the common good, acknowledges the presence of legitimate diversity, respects the human and political rights of all citizens, and promotes a shared determination to build a nation based on justice for all and solidarity towards those in need.

Thanks to Pancasila, in Indonesia many religious traditions live side by side in harmony, and all citizens have the same rights and duties irrespective of ethnic origin or religious and cultural practices. The principles which have given rise to this favourable situation and which merit everyone's appreciation need always to be proclaimed anew, lest their vital importance for the life of the nation be forgotten or overlooked. Vigilance is necessary in order to ensure that religious freedom, peaceful coexistence among believers, and the equal dignity of all citizens are effectively respected, especially in the face of certain distorted interpretations of religion and the danger of religious intolerance, which is always ready to manifest itself, as seen recently in certain grave incidents which have deeply saddened me. Everyone who has at heart the true good of Indonesia must seek to ensure that the spirit and principles of Pancasila are correctly applied.

Reflecting on recent events affecting East Timor, I am hopeful that a more fruitful dialogue will be pursued at all levels. All those who in any way are responsible for East Timor's future must be convinced of the need to arrive as soon as possible at a just and peaceful solution. This has been the ardent aspiration of the people there for such a long time.

Mr Ambassador, I greatly appreciate your kind reference to your Catholic fellow citizens' contribution to the life of the nation. The Church carries out many activities in the social field, in health care and education — activities which benefit the whole of society. Following the teaching of her founder Jesus Christ, the Church also fulfils the important task of enlightening and training the consciences of citizens with regard to their rights and duties as part of the national community. The principal aim in all of this is to ensure that nothing is done against human dignity and that everyone is treated with the respect due to God's beloved creatures. Ever since their active involvement in the events that led to independence just over 50 years ago, Indonesian Catholics, supported and encouraged by the Holy See, have assiduously worked for the good of the nation and will continue to serve their country with love and pride. This was the meaning of the words spoken by Cardinal Darmaatmadja at a meeting between President Soeharto and the National Assembly of Catholics on 2 November 1995: "Together with our numerous predecessors we too want to involve ourselves in every aspect of national development.... We have pledged to each other to be Indonesian for 100%, precisely because we want to be Catholic for 100%". Genuine love of country forms an important part of every Catholic's duty and way of life.

Mr Ambassador, I wish you well as you discharge the lofty mission to which you have been called as your nation's Representative to the Holy See. I assure you of the help of the various departments of the Roman Curia. Upon Your Excellency and the Indonesian people I cordially invoke an abundance of divine blessings.

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