



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
AT THE PRESENTATION OF THE LETTERS
ACCREDITING NEW AMBASSADORS TO THE HOLY SEE***

Thursday, 23 May 1996

Your Excellencies, I am pleased to welcome you today to the Vatican and to accept the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed Ambassadors Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of your respective countries: *Kenya, Malawi, New Zealand* and the *Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan*. I renew the expression of my esteem and friendship for your peoples, for their historical, cultural and religious values and achievements, for their hopes and efforts in the pressing task of building a world of peace, justice and social well-being. I thank you for the greetings which you have conveyed from your respective Heads of State, and I cordially reciprocate with good wishes for them and for the nations which you represent.

At the *World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen* under the auspices of the United Nations in March of last year, at which the leaders of your own countries were also present, the international community committed itself to a new and determined effort to promote the development of peoples. The Summit set itself the commendable goal of seriously tackling the problem of poverty in the world. The severity and scale of the problem is there for all to see. The sad fact is that a considerable part of the human family lives in absolute poverty, without access to even elementary standards of nutrition, health care or education. And as a further injustice, by far the greater number of the disinherited of the earth are women and young girls. If even a part of what the Summit proposed could become a reality, the human family would take a substantial step towards achieving that economic and social advancement to which all peoples aspire.

To the Holy See such a commitment seems *a genuine sign of hope* and a solid basis upon which to organize a just and effective fight against the many obstacles, old and new, which lie in the path of the struggle for a more secure and dignified life. In meeting you, the representatives of countries of three continents, differing in your political and social organization as well as in the deeper

cultural and religious traditions of your peoples, my thoughts turn to that fundamental truth of all development, namely, *the centrality of the human person*. All economic and social policy should serve the genuine good of people, and not the other way round. This is true in every part of the world, in every system and community.

True progress, even on the material level, demands an overriding respect for *the spiritual dimension of man*. It precludes a vision of life that is merely or even principally material and economic. It is precisely the spiritual nature of man which leads him to conceive, demand and strive for advancement in every other sphere. In my [speech to the United Nations General Assembly in October 1995](#), I sought to underline the essential need, in every aspect of public and international life, for respect for the inalienable spiritual nature of human beings: "The politics of nations ... can never ignore the transcendent, spiritual dimension of the human experience, and could never ignore it without harming the cause of man and the cause of human freedom. Whatever diminishes man whatever shortens the horizon of man's aspiration to goodness harms the cause of freedom. In order to recover our hope and our trust at the end of this century of sorrows, we must regain sight of that transcendent horizon of possibility to which the soul of man aspires" (IOANNIS PAULI PP. II [Oratio ad Generalem Nationum Unitarum Coetum Neo-Eboraci habita](#), 16, die 5 oct. 1995: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, XVIII, 2 (1995) 743).

As diplomats, you readily understand the import of this truth. Relations between individuals, communities and nations cannot be judged merely in terms of power or economic interests. *Hope and trust* are personal and social virtues essential to making co-operation and solidarity, at every level, possible and fruitful. I am confident that your mission as the diplomatic representatives of your countries to the Holy See will offer you many opportunities to reflect on these higher spiritual values. I hope that you will be ever more committed to their affirmation in international as well as in interpersonal relations.

As you fulfil your responsibilities, I invoke upon you and your families, and upon the peoples which you represent, the abundant Blessings of Almighty God.

**Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, vol. XIX, 1 p. 1333-1335.

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