



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO MR. MARATBEK SALIEVIC BAKIEV
AMBASSADOR OF THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC TO THE HOLY SEE****

Consistory Hall

Thursday, 14 December 2006

Mr Ambassador,

It is with pleasure that I welcome you to the Vatican today and accept the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kyrgyz Republic to the Holy See. On this significant occasion I would ask you kindly to convey my cordial greetings to His Excellency President Kurmanbek Bakiyev and the people of your country. Assure them of my gratitude for their good wishes and of my prayers for the nation's peace and well-being.

The Church's diplomatic relations form a part of her mission of service to the international community. Her engagement with civil society is anchored in the conviction that the task of building a more just world must acknowledge and consider man's supernatural vocation. The Holy See strives therefore to promote an understanding of the human person who "receives from God his essential dignity and with it the capacity to transcend every social order so as to move towards truth and goodness" (*Centesimus Annus*, 38). From this understanding the Church assists the vast array of cultures and nations that constitute our world to articulate and protect the universal values which safeguard the dignity of every person and serve the common good.

The extraordinary natural beauty of Kyrgyzstan is a blessing for your nation. Such dramatic evidence of the hand of the Creator gladdens the hearts of your people and helps them lift their thoughts towards the Almighty. Indeed, the people of Kyrgyzstan know well the importance of religious freedom and understand that if the spiritual dimension of persons is repressed or even denied, the soul of a nation is crushed. During the tragic epoch of intimidation in Central Asian history, while the supremacy of force endured, religious believers in your country nurtured a hope

for freedom and justice, a future in which the supremacy of truth about the human person and the purpose of society would prevail. Today, that hope is experienced in a variety of ways including the tolerance demonstrated between religious and ethnic communities, the respect for the role of the family at the heart of your society, and the flourishing of your nation's fine arts. Such traits and values, which have in fact long adorned your history, assume a heightened importance of regional significance when we consider Kyrgyzstan's unique geographical position as a cultural crossroads.

As the Kyrgyz Republic continues to forge its national identity, it must be borne in mind that the important component of economic development contains a moral aspect, of crucial importance to the well-being and peaceful progress of a nation. It is here that the demand for justice is satisfied (cf. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 10). The right to meaningful work and an acceptable standard of living, the assurance of a fair distribution of goods and wealth, and the responsible use of natural resources all depend upon a concept of growth which is not limited to merely satisfying material necessities. Instead, such a notion must also highlight the dignity of every human person – the proper subject of all progress – and thereby enhance the common good of all humanity.

The legitimate aspirations of economic development are intrinsically linked to the principles and practices which favour the civic stability necessary for prosperity. Your country has already taken some steps towards protecting the fundamental rights of citizens and promoting democratic practices. Responsible and transparent governance free of interference, the maintenance of law and order, freedom of the press, and public participation in the civic institutions committed to the genuine development of the nation, all have their particular role in contributing to a culture of peace and collaboration. I encourage your government in its efforts to ensure that this process does not stall but indeed is strengthened.

Mr Ambassador, the members of the Catholic Church in your country are very few. Enjoying friendly relations with the Muslim and Orthodox communities, they are eager to reach out impartially to all peoples of Kyrgyzstan. Already their charitable activity extends from University teaching to prison visiting and to caring for the handicapped. This forms part of the Church's commitment to practical and concrete love for every human being and in a special way for the poor. In providing these services she desires neither power nor privilege, but only the freedom to express her belief in the "unbreakable bond between love of God and love of neighbour" (*Deus Caritas Est*, 16) through works of goodness, justice and peace. I am confident that as new social and spiritual needs arise in your land the Catholic community will respond generously and wisely.

Your Excellency, as you enter the diplomatic community accredited to the Holy See, I assure you of the willing assistance of the various offices and agencies of the Roman Curia. You have kindly noted that the relations existing between the Kyrgyz Republic and the Holy See are friendly and based on mutual respect and cooperation. May your mission serve to strengthen these bonds of understanding. With my sincere good wishes, I invoke upon you, your family and all your fellow citizens the abundant blessings of Almighty God.

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