



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO INDONESIA, PAPUA NEW GUINEA,
TIMOR-LESTE AND SINGAPORE
(2-13 September 2024)

MEETING WITH THE AUTHORITIES, CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS

Theatre of the Cultural Centre of the National University of Singapore
Thursday, 12 September 2024

[Multimedia]

Mr President,
Mr Prime Minister,
Distinguished Authorities,
Esteemed Representatives of Civil Society,
Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

I thank the President for his kind words of welcome, and I renew my appreciation for his recent visit to the Vatican. Furthermore, I am grateful to all the Authorities for the cordial welcome to this City-State, a commercial crossroads of primary importance and a place where different peoples meet.

Those arriving here for the first time cannot fail to be impressed by the mass of ultra-modern skyscrapers that seem to rise from the sea. They are a clear testimony to human ingenuity, the dynamism of Singaporean society and the acumen of the entrepreneurial spirit, which have found fertile ground here for their expression.

Singapore's story is one of growth and resilience. From humble beginnings, this nation has reached an advanced level of development, which can only stem from rational decisions and not by chance. Indeed, it is the result of an unwavering commitment to carry out projects and initiatives that are well thought-out and in tune with the specific characteristics of the place. In these days you are celebrating the one hundred and first anniversary of the birth of Lee Kuan Yew, the first Prime Minister of the Republic of Singapore, who held this office from 1959 to 1990 and gave a strong impetus to the country's rapid growth and transformation.

It is important that Singapore has not only prospered economically, but has also striven to build a society in which social justice and the common good are held in high regard. I think in particular of your commitment to improving the quality of life of citizens through public housing policies, high quality education and an efficient healthcare system. I hope that these efforts will continue until all Singaporeans are able to benefit from them fully.

In this regard, I would like to highlight the risk entailed in focusing solely on pragmatism or placing merit above all things, namely the unintended consequence of justifying the exclusion of those on the margins from benefiting from progress.

Here, I recognize and commend the various policies and initiatives put in place to support the most vulnerable, and I hope that special attention will be paid to the poor and the elderly – whose labours have laid the foundations for the Singapore we see today – as well as to protecting the dignity of migrant workers. These workers contribute a great deal to society and should be guaranteed a fair wage.

The sophisticated technologies of the digital age and rapid developments in the use of artificial intelligence must not lead us to forget about the essential need to cultivate real and concrete human relationships. These technologies should be used to bring us closer together by promoting understanding and solidarity, and never to isolate ourselves in a dangerously false and intangible reality.

Singapore is a mosaic of ethnicities, cultures and religions living together in harmony, and this word is very important: harmony. The achievement and preservation of this positive inclusiveness is facilitated by the impartiality of public authorities who engage in constructive dialogue with all, thus making it possible for everyone to make their own unique contribution to the common good and preventing extremism and intolerance from gaining strength or endangering social harmony. Mutual respect, cooperation, dialogue and the freedom to exercise one's beliefs within the confines of the law are the conditions that allow for Singapore's success and stability. They are necessary for avoiding conflict and chaos and provide instead for a balanced and sustainable development.

From the very beginning of its presence in Singapore, the Catholic Church has sought to offer its

own distinctive contribution to the progress of the nation, especially in the areas of education and healthcare. This was possible thanks to the spirit of sacrifice and dedication of missionaries and the faithful. Always animated by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Catholic community is also at the forefront of works of charity, contributing significantly to humanitarian efforts and managing several healthcare institutions and many humanitarian organizations, including Caritas which is well known.

According to the teaching of the Second Vatican Council's Declaration on relations with non-Christian religions, *Nostra Aetate*, the Church has also constantly promoted interreligious dialogue and cooperation between different faith communities, in a spirit of openness and mutual respect, which are fundamental for building a just and peaceful society.

My presence here comes forty-three years after diplomatic relations were established between the Holy See and Singapore. The purpose of my visit is to confirm Catholics in their faith, and thus help them offer a clear witness to their faith, as well as encouraging them to continue, with joy and dedication, their cooperation with all men and women of good will in building a healthy and cohesive civil society for the sake of the common good.

Singapore also has a specific role to play on the international level — let us not forget this — which is threatened today by conflict and wars that have spilled much blood, and I welcome your noteworthy promotion of multilateralism and a rules-based order shared by all. I encourage you to continue to work in favour of the unity and fraternity of humanity and the common good of all peoples and all nations, in a way that does not exclude others or is restricted to your national interests.

I would also like to recall the role of the family, which is where we learn to be loved and to love, the first place where everyone learns to relate to others. Yet we see that the foundations on which families are built are being challenged by current social conditions, and run the risk of being weakened. Families must be allowed to transmit the values that give meaning and shape to life and to teach young people how to form solid and healthy relationships. Efforts to promote, protect and support family unity through the work of various institutions are therefore to be commended.

We cannot hide the fact that today we are experiencing an environmental crisis, and we should not underestimate the impact that a small nation like Singapore can have in this regard. Your unique location gives you access to capital, technology and talent, resources that can drive innovation in order to take better care of the health of our common home.

Your commitment to sustainable development and the preservation of creation is an example to follow, and your search for innovative solutions to address environmental challenges can encourage other countries to do the same. Singapore is a shining example of what humanity can achieve by working together in harmony, with a sense of responsibility and a spirit of inclusiveness

and fraternity. This resembles a summary of your attitude: working together, in harmony, with a sense of responsibility and in a spirit of fraternity and inclusiveness. I encourage you to continue on this path, trusting in God's promise and his fatherly love for all.

Mr President, Ladies and Gentlemen, may God help you to respond to the needs and expectations of your people, and encourage you to see how God can accomplish great things for the good of all through those who remain humble and grateful.

God bless Singapore!