



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO THE FAR EAST AND MAURITIUS

MEETING WITH THE LEADERS OF THE MAJOR RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES OF INDONESIA

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

Taman Mini Indonesia Indah, Jakarta
Tuesday, 10 October 1989

Your Excellency,
Distinguished Ministers and Members of Government,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am pleased to have this opportunity to meet you, the *respected leaders of the major religious communities* represented among the people of Indonesia. As the Bishop of Rome, Successor of the Apostle Peter to whom Christ entrusted a responsibility for all his disciples, I have come on this pastoral visit to Indonesia in order to strengthen the faith of my Catholic brothers and sisters (Cfr. *Luc. 22, 32*). I have come to meet them, to pray with them, and to assure them that they are an important part of the Catholic Church spread throughout the world.

My visit is not restricted, however, to Indonesia's Catholics. This country embraces within its far-flung boundaries a number of peoples, with a great richness of languages and customs. There are the traditional, indigenous religious cultures which still are found in many places. Ancient religious traditions such as Buddhism and Hinduism nourish their adherents with the age-old wisdom of the East. Confucianism too has added its characteristic note, while Islam has become the religious path of the majority of Indonesians. The Catholic Church has been present here for centuries and can give thanks to God for the deep faith of generations of Indonesian Catholics. Other Christian communities also have had a long history in this nation. This *impressive heritage of religious*

traditions is widely recognized as a significant dimension of Indonesia's life as a nation, one that calls for profound respect from all its citizens.

For this reason, I am happy to greet you, the representatives of those communities with which Indonesia's Catholics are in close contact. I come to you as a man of peace concerned, like yourselves, for the growth of peace and true harmony among all the peoples of the earth. *I come to you as a man of faith who believes that all peace is a gift from God.* It is this peace of God "which passes all understanding" (*Phil. 4, 7*) that I invoke upon all the people of Indonesia.

One of the principal challenges facing modern Indonesia is that of building a harmonious society from the many diverse elements which are the source of the nation's present promise and future greatness. Indonesia's Catholics find a deep motivation for their contributions to this enterprise in the *vision of universal harmony which the Christian faith offers them.* By our belief in the one God who is the Creator of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen, we who follow Christ are inspired to work for the advancement of peace and harmony among all people.

This Christian vision is in no way alien to the vision of unity which is characteristic of many other religions. Many religious traditions view the universe as an organic whole, whose parts are knit together in a great web of relations. From this vision is derived a respect for nature, sensitivity in human relationships, a high esteem for love and cooperation within families, a strong sense of justice and the recognition of the rights of each person. *Belief in God as the Creator of all things is a powerful stimulus to promote a respectful dialogue among the adherents of the various religions.* Undoubtedly, "when Christians and the followers of other religions are united in their belief in the Creator, there exists a sound basis for mutual understanding and peaceful exchange" (Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Allocutio ad Indonesiae episcopos limina Apostolorum visitantes* 7, die 20 maii 1989: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II XII*, 1 [1989] 1290).

This sort of respectful dialogue and exchange can play a powerful role in the building up of a peaceful and unified society. I wish to express my hope that Indonesia's religious believers will take the lead in showing that *profound respect for others* which can foster enduring harmony among the diverse peoples of this nation.

In this regard I am very encouraged by the ideals and practical structures established by the Indonesian Constitution of 1945 concerning the freedom of each citizen to profess the religion of his or her choice and to enjoy freedom of worship. It is the teaching of the Catholic Church that this right to religious freedom is grounded in the very dignity of the human person created by God (Cfr. *Dignitatis Humanae*, 2). *Religious freedom is indeed a fundamental human right, one which should be enjoyed by all religious communities, as well as individuals.* Hence, it is very important that this right be protected, "that the State should effectively ensure and promote the observance of religious freedom, especially when, alongside the great majority who follow one religion, there exist one or more minority groups of another faith (Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Nuntius ob diem ad pacem*

fovendam dicatum, pro a. D. 1989, 8, die 8 dec. 1988: Insegnamenti di Giovanni Polo II, XI, 4 [1988] 1788).

Distinguished friends: today more than ever the world has become sensitive to the yearning of all peoples to be free, to experience the liberty to live in accordance with the dictates of conscience, to search for the truth without constraint, and to express one's convictions in a society which promotes authentic progress and a constructive dialogue among people of different beliefs. It is true that this yearning for freedom, unless it is disciplined and directed by a sensitivity to spiritual values and the objective principles of human morality, can degenerate into a permissiveness which enslaves rather than liberates. But this is the very reason why all religious believers should support the cause of authentic liberation *by providing that spiritual vision which must necessarily inform any genuine growth in freedom*. In a very real sense, it can be said that the responsibility for building a society of cooperation, tolerance and unity within diversity falls to the present generation as a sacred trust, and that *Indonesia's religious leaders have a weighty responsibility in this regard*.

So too, do Indonesia's young people. For this reason I would appeal to them with the words I addressed to young Muslims in Morocco in 1985. "Normally", I said, "young people look towards the future, they long for a more just and more human world... (But) young people can build a better future if they first *put their faith in God* and if they pledge themselves to build this new world in accordance with God's plan, with wisdom and trust" (Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Allocutio Albae domi, in Marochio, ad iuvenes muslimos, 6. 4, die 19 aug. 1985: Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II, VIII, 2 [1985] 501 s. 500).*

This is no small challenge. Indeed, the project of working together in respectful collaboration often involves adopting new perspectives, putting past tensions or hostilities behind and looking towards the future. Each of us is called to adopt *an attitude of generous service to one another and in favour of all*. As the Second Vatican Council has impressed upon Catholics: "we cannot truly pray to God the Father of all if we treat any people in other than a brotherly fashion" (*Nostra Aetate*, 5).

In a culturally diverse society, "to treat others in a brotherly fashion" means *to live in dialogue*. This can take on a number of forms. "Before all else, dialogue is a manner of acting, an attitude and a spirit which guides one's conduct. It implies concern, respect, and hospitality towards the other" (Secret. pro Non Christianis "*Notae quaedam de Ecclesiae rationibus ad asseclas aliarum religionum*", 1984, n. 29: AAS 76 [1984] 824). In other words, it involves what is often called the "*dialogue of life*", where people strive to live in an open and neighbourly spirit, sharing their joys and sorrows, their human problems and preoccupations.

But there is also the "*dialogue of deeds*": collaboration for the integral development of all citizens. To this can be added the important *dialogue of theological exchange*, by which the partners aim to grow in understanding of their respective religious heritages, and to appreciate each other's

spiritual values. And finally, there can be the *dialogue of religious experience* by which persons rooted in their own religious traditions share their spiritual riches, such as prayer and contemplation (Cfr. *ibid.* 29-35: “l. c.” pp. 824-825).

In this context, a particular question merits attention. It is that of *truth itself*, its demands on those who believe, and its requirements for a sincere and respectful dialogue. Unless these issues are faced forthrightly and honestly, an enduring and fruitful collaboration among believers will not be possible.

The voice of conscience commits the human person at the deepest level to think and act in accordance with the truth. To act against one’s conscience would be to betray both the truth and our very selves. *Religious believers therefore can never be expected to compromise the truth* that they are committed to uphold in their lives.

Yet a firm adherence to the truth of one’s convictions in no way implies being closed to others. Rather it is an *invitation to open oneself to the dialogue* which we have already described. This is so for two reasons.

First, *knowledge of the truth commits us to share the gift we have received with others*. In the Holy Bible, Christians read that “God desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (Cfr. *1Tim.* 2, 4). The Catholic Church is profoundly convinced that the truth, wherever it is found, can serve as a path to the one God, the Father of all. For this reason, she rejects nothing which is true and holy in other religions (Cfr. *Nostra Aetate*, 2). The Church does not waver in her belief that Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, is “the Way, the Truth and the Life” (*Io.* 14, 6) and the definitive revelation of God to humanity. Yet, in the service to the truth that she has received, and in a spirit of respect and dialogue, the Church does not hesitate *to cooperate with all men and women of good will* for the spiritual and moral elevation of mankind and the dawn of a just and peaceful human society.

Respectful dialogue with others also enables us to be enriched by their insights, challenged by their questions and impelled to deepen our knowledge of the truth. Far from stifling dialogue or rendering it superfluous, *a commitment to the truth of one’s religious tradition by its very nature makes dialogue with others both necessary and fruitful*.

Here in Indonesia, the establishment by the Ministry for Religious Affairs of a national forum for communication and dialogue between religions may be viewed as a positive step. The great task of serving the truth invites you to join hands in cooperation. I offer my prayers for the success and the continuing fruitfulness of the good work that you have begun.

Dear brothers and sister: with each passing day, the unity of the human family becomes more and more apparent, even when that unity is dramatically threatened by the forces of war, violence and

repression. Where *spiritual values such as mutual respect, peaceful collaboration, and reconciliation* are present, not only is the unity of individual groups strengthened, but the life of entire nations can well be changed and the course of history altered.

The challenge is ours. Together let us strive for mutual understanding and peace. On behalf of all mankind, let us make common cause of safeguarding and fostering those values which will build up the spiritual and moral health of our world. Let us *generously serve the will of God*, as we have come to know it, in a spirit of dialogue, respect and cooperation.

May God bless you all with his peace!

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