



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. Mr DILSHAD NAJMUDDIN
NEW AMBASSADOR OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF PAKISTAN
TO THE HOLY SEE*

Friday, 4 January 1991

Mr Ambassador,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Vatican and to accept your Letters of Credence as you begin your mission as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. I would ask you to convey my greetings to President Ghulam Ishaq Khan and to assure him of my good wishes and prayers for your country's prosperity and peace. It is my fervent hope that an unswerving commitment to promoting the full well-being of all individuals and solidarity among social groups will ever inspire Pakistan's development and growth as a nation.

As Your Excellency has rightly observed, the present world situation is characterized by two apparently contrary tendencies. On the one hand, there is a growing desire among peoples and nations to see hostility and conflict replaced by dialogue and cooperation. On the other hand, we cannot fail to note with deep concern the appearance of new and dramatic confrontations and the unfortunate persistence of intolerance based on racial, ethnic and religious prejudice. In the light of this preoccupying situation, it is incumbent upon all people of good will, and especially the leaders of nations, to renew their confidence in the cause of peace, which rests on respect both for the legitimate sovereignty of each nation and the inalienable dignity and rights of every individual.

Among these rights, one which requires increasing attention in the contemporary world is freedom of conscience. The importance of respect for the conscience of every person is the theme of my *Message for the World Day of Peace* this year. I am convinced that the exercise and juridical protection of this freedom is a vital requirement for peace in the world. For conscience bears witness to "the *transcendence of the person*, also in regard to society at large, and as such is

inviolable... To deny an individual complete freedom of conscience— and in particular the freedom to seek the truth— or to attempt to impose a particular way of seeing the truth, constitutes a violation of that individual's most personal rights. This also aggravates animosities and tensions, which can easily lead to strained and hostile relations within society or even to open conflict. In the end, it is *on the level of conscience* that the difficult task of ensuring a firm and lasting peace is most effectively confronted" (Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Nuntius ob diem ad pacem fovendam dicatum pro a. D. 1991*, 1, die 8 dec. 1990: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, XIII, 2 [1990] 1559 s).

In this regard, I have many times referred to the right of individuals and organized religious communities to profess and practise their faith freely, as a cornerstone of the structure of human rights and an essential element for peaceful human coexistence. Respect for religious freedom serves as both an indication and a guarantee of authentic social progress. As Pakistan strives to embody in its civic and cultural life a firm dedication to respect for human dignity, it will discover in the various religious traditions of its people a profound inspiration and a lasting impetus for building a just and harmonious society.

The Catholics of Pakistan, in full equality with all their fellow citizens, desire to participate actively in their country's political, social and cultural advancement. They bring to it the spiritual vision and moral values which derive from their Christian faith. Even though they are a religious minority, they rightly expect that their religious freedom will be both affirmed and effectively safeguarded by law. I am confident that, in accordance with the democratic principles governing the modern State of Pakistan, they will continue to make their proper contribution to national life.

Mr Ambassador, I assure you once more of my good wishes for the success of your mission. As you enter the family of diplomats accredited to the Holy See, please know of the readiness of the various offices and agencies of the Roman Curia to assist you in the fulfilment of your duties. Upon you, and upon the leaders and people of Pakistan, I cordially invoke the abundant blessings of the Most High God.

*AAS 83 (1991), p. 757-758.

Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II, vol. XIV, 1 pp. 33-35.

L'Attività della Santa Sede 1991 pp. 15-16.

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