



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. Mrs JAYALEKSHIMI MOHIDEEN
NEW AMBASSADOR OF SINGAPORE***

Thursday, 24 January 1991 Madame Ambassador, I am pleased to welcome you to the Vatican and to accept the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Singapore to the Holy See. On this occasion, I would ask you to convey my greetings and good wishes to President Wee Kim Wee and the members of your Government. It is my fervent hope that having celebrated the first quarter century of Singapore's independence, you and your fellow citizens will continue to grow in your commitment to the democratic values of freedom, justice and the pursuit of the common good, which are essential for the sound and integral development of society. Your Excellency has made kind reference to my Pastoral Visit to Singapore in 1986. At that time, I was impressed by the wide diversity of peoples and cultures which make up your nation. Such pluralism by its very nature demands of each individual and social group a deep and abiding respect for the legitimate aspirations, traditions and beliefs of others, as well as a readiness to engage in sincere dialogue and generous cooperation in maintaining harmony in society. Genuine harmony, however, requires that the fundamental dignity and rights of each person be effectively recognized and safeguarded. In the great project of consolidating national unity, religious believers of all traditions have a particular contribution to make, for by "drawing from the deepest resources of a right conscience" they can derive "higher incentives for building up a more just and more human society" (Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Nuntius ob diem ad pacem fovendam dicatum pro a. D. 1988*, 3, die 8 dec. 1987: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, X, 3, [1987] 1336 ss). A Well formed religious conscience, in fact, greatly helps people to "gain a keener awareness of their own destiny, to make the world conform better to the surpassing dignity of man, to strive for a more deeply rooted sense of universal brotherhood, and to meet the pressing appeals of our times with a generous and common effort of love" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 91). In the pursuit of these goals, the political community and religious bodies are independent of each other and self-governing, though they are made up of the same people and serve the same social reality. They are called to close cooperation and solidarity, to the exclusion of baseless rivalries or suspicions. For her part, the Catholic Church wishes her members to "form their own judgement in the light of truth, direct their activities with a sense of responsibility, and strive for what is true and just in willing cooperation with others" (*Dignitatis Humanae*, 2). She therefore encourages a respectful and constructive dialogue with all who have the good of society at heart. The Church is convinced that in a truly pluralistic and democratic society there should be no conflict between the free and public profession of religious faith and the obligations incumbent upon all citizens to promote the common good. This conviction guides the diplomatic activity of the Holy See within the international community. It also inspires the efforts of the members of the Catholic community in Singapore to maintain friendly relations with all sectors of society, while faithfully and consistently applying the teachings of the Gospel to every dimension of their personal and

social lives. In this regard, I would recall that "authentic religious freedom cannot be limited to simple tolerance" (Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Allocutio ad Nationum Legatos*, 16, die 13 ian. 1990: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, XIII, 1 [1990] 81), of individual believers or religious groups. Not is it compatible with the restriction of their witness to the purely private sphere. Rather, the right to profess religious beliefs and to promote, within the limits of the common good, the vision of truth which those beliefs entail is matched by an obligation on the part of the civil authorities to permit believers and their communities to witness to their faith publicly and without fear, and to live out all its demands, including its ethical and social demands. Madame Ambassador: at a time of grave anxiety and suffering resulting from the tragic conflict in the Gulf Region, I express the hope that countries such as your own, which are not involved in the hostilities, will join in seeking new and creative means of promoting a return to dialogue and negotiation as the only true path towards restoring international order and justice. In renewing my good wishes at the beginning of your mission, I assure you of the readiness of the various offices of the Holy See to assist you. Upon yourself and upon all the citizens of the Republic of Singapore I cordially invoke the abundant blessings of the Most High

God.

*AAS LXXXIII pp. 933-935. *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, vol. XIV, 1 pp. 181-183. *L'Attività della Santa Sede* 1991 pp. 84-85. *L'Osservatore Romano* 25.1.1991 p.5. *L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly edition in English* n.4 p.22. © Copyright 1991 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana