



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER
TO THE NEW AMBASSADOR
OF THE REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS TO THE HOLY SEE***

Thursday, 6 December 2001

Your Excellency,

I am pleased to accept the Letters by which you have been accredited as Ambassador Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Mauritius to the Holy See. I ask you kindly to convey to President Cassam Uteem and to the Right Honourable Prime Minister my cordial greetings and the assurance of my prayers for your country and its people. Although it is now twelve years since my Pastoral Visit to Mauritius, I still treasure memories of the warm welcome I received from your fellow citizens, and of the striking natural beauty which the Creator has bestowed upon your land.

During my visit I was able to observe for myself your nation's rich ethnic, religious and cultural diversity, and learn about the efforts being made to promote a civic life marked by tolerance, respect for others and the advancement of the common good. As you and your fellow-citizens prepare to mark the Tenth Anniversary of the establishment of Mauritius as a Republic, these values, deeply rooted in your history and culture, point the way to a future of promise and hope. In the Indian Ocean, your nation has sought to be a model of harmony between diverse groups, and of fruitful cooperation in building a just and welcoming world. By continuing to accept one another in the diversity of their cultures, beliefs, races and languages, the people of Mauritius will become, as I said during my Visit, "the image of a society of peaceful coexistence which can in some way prefigure an international community which would truly be a home for all peoples" (*Address in Plaisance*, 14 October 1989, No. 3).

Mr Ambassador, you are entering upon your mission to the Holy See at a time when the attention of the world is focused on the issue of global terrorism, which threatens to exacerbate already

serious divisions within the human family and to hinder the progress being made towards greater solidarity in international life. The current crisis poses a challenge to all nations, great and small, to renew their efforts to build a culture of peace through dialogue, understanding and cooperation. It is precisely as a means of contributing to this great enterprise that the Holy See is present in the family of nations. The Holy See seeks to affirm the religious and spiritual values which are essential to humanity's quest to create an international order founded on respect for the specific culture of each people, while at the same time embodying the universal human aspiration to well-being and peace.

As Your Excellency has noted, and your country's long experience of ethnic, religious and cultural pluralism has shown, the followers of the various religions have an important role to play in serving the cause of peace. Indeed "a relationship with the one God, the common Father of all, cannot fail to bring about a greater sense of human brotherhood and a more fraternal life together" (*Message for the 2001 World Day of Peace*, 1). Today more than ever, believers are called to join in condemning every attempt to exploit race or religion for the sake of fomenting hatred, violence and division. At the same time, they can lay a firm foundation for authentic social renewal by helping to form consciences in the ways of brotherhood and in respect for the inviolable dignity and rights of each individual. At every level there has to be a firm commitment to eliminating all forms of hostility, prejudice and discord at their very root: in the depths of the human heart.

A fundamental role in building this culture of peace is played by the family, by teachers and by educational institutions. From the beginning of her presence in Mauritius, the Catholic Church, in fidelity to the Gospel, has proclaimed the dignity of the family and its role in God's plan for human society. Today especially, when the identity and the dignity of the family are being challenged by cultural models alien to the values which have traditionally shaped your society, it is essential that this "fundamental unit of society" receive due acknowledgment and the support necessary if it is to carry out its mission of providing for the sound moral and civic preparation of the citizens who have to build and defend the future of your democracy. Catholic education plays a significant role, not only by helping parents to bring up their children according to the human and spiritual values which guide their lives, but also by training young people to be mature, responsible and productive members of the community. This constitutes a vital service to the common good of the nation.

As you begin your mission at the Holy See, I offer Your Excellency prayerful good wishes for your success in the responsibilities which you are now undertaking in the service of your nation. I likewise assure you of the constant readiness of the offices of the Holy See to be of assistance. Upon you and your family, and upon all the beloved people of Mauritius, I cordially invoke God's abundant blessings.

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