



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II
TO THE NEW AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC
OF PHILIPPINES TO THE HOLY SEE***

Friday, 8 February 2002

Mr. Ambassador,

I am happy to welcome you today to the Vatican and to accept the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of the Philippines to the Holy See. Your country and the Holy See have enjoyed diplomatic relations for fifty years now, and I am confident that you will work to extend and strengthen the close ties of friendship and cooperation existing between us. I am most grateful for the greetings which you bring from Her Excellency President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and from the Filipino Government and people. Please convey to them the assurance of my esteem and good will, as well as of my prayers for the harmony and continuing development of the nation.

In Your Excellency's words about the Filipino people's hopes and efforts in the cause of peace at home and in the world, there is an echo of that universal longing for goodness, justice and solidarity in human relations which has been cruelly shaken by the events of recent months. As believers we know that peace is not the result of merely human plans and endeavors, but is a gift from God to the world which he created. It is the fullness of his blessings to man, the only creature that God willed for its own sake (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 24). The recent gathering for peace at Assisi, which brought together representatives of the Christian Churches and Ecclesial Communities, as well as followers of many of the world's major religions, showed how people of very different religious and cultural backgrounds are firmly convinced that violence in all its forms is totally incompatible with true religious sentiment, and indeed with human dignity. It is the task of the leaders of nations to find the practical and technical ways to translate into laws, institutions and actions the yearning of the human heart for the tranquillity of order which is true peace.

Your own country is not unaffected by what is happening. A negotiated solution to longstanding

difficulties has not been forthcoming and the level of conflict has risen. Let me repeat here what I proposed in this year's [Message for the World Day of Peace](#). The pillars of peace in your land, as everywhere else, are *justice* and *forgiveness*: the justice which ensures full respect for rights and responsibilities, and equitable distribution of benefits and burdens; and the forgiveness which heals and rebuilds troubled human relations from their foundations (cf. No. 3). Certainly, we cannot think that justice and forgiveness will come as the result of violence and conflict; they are moral virtues which entail our personal and collective responsibility to choose what leads to the common good and avoid all that denies or distorts the truth of our being.

All reasonable men and women recognize the common good as the purpose of good governance. But this good is a *human* good, looking to the integral well-being of people in all the complexity of their personal and interpersonal lives. It would be a grave mistake to limit public policies to the search for economic progress, which is all too often measured in terms of increased consumerism, as if that alone could satisfy people's aspirations. As I wrote in the Encyclical Letter [Centesimus Annus](#): "It is not wrong to want to live better; what is wrong is a style of life which is presumed to be better when it is directed towards 'having' rather than 'being', and which wants to have more, not in order to be more but in order to spend life in enjoyment as an end in itself" (No. 36). True progress cannot but take proper account of a people's cultural and spiritual needs and traditions. In this sense policies and programs stand or fall depending on whether or not *they favor integral human development*. Thus the increasing globalization of the economy, with its leveling of cultural differences, is not necessarily and in every case a solution to real needs. In fact, it can aggravate the imbalances already evident in the relations between those who benefit from the world's growing capacity to produce wealth and those who are left at the margin of progress. The great moral challenge facing nations and the international community is to combine *development* with *solidarity* — a genuine sharing of benefits — in order to overcome both dehumanizing underdevelopment and the "overdevelopment" which considers people as mere economic units in a consumer system (cf. [Ecclesia in Asia](#), 32). Development therefore is never a merely technical or economic question; it is fundamentally *a human and moral question*. It requires an enhanced sense of moral commitment on the part of those who serve the common good.

The question today is often whether the dominant culture can set economic and political life within a genuinely moral framework, in order to ensure that the common good is served. It is precisely here that there is a need for fruitful cooperation between public authorities and the Church. Each in their own sphere serves the integral development of society's members. In your country, Mr. Ambassador, there is a long tradition of mutual support and cooperation between the Church and civil society. Moments of difficulty have not been lacking, but in general they have been quickly and correctly overcome. On many occasions I have encouraged the Filipino Bishops in their efforts to educate and train the laity in the religious and social teaching that will enable them to transform and build up in justice and solidarity the society in which they live. The challenges before your nation are great, and they call for the best commitment of all its citizens, including the special contribution of its young people. Building on the best Filipino traditions of family life and mutual

concern and service, and curtailing the excesses of privilege and partisan interests, the nation can look to a very bright future.

Mr. Ambassador, as you enter the community of diplomats accredited to the Holy See you will be aware of entering a context which is different from that in which diplomatic representatives usually find themselves. Here you will have a chance to reflect personally on the deeper questions concerning the progress of humanity. Here you will be able to contribute to a continuing debate on the truths which underlie the events and currents of our human history. With every good wish for the success of your mission, I invoke the blessings of Almighty God upon you, your family and the beloved Filipino people.

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