



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II
TO CARDINAL CRESCENZIO SEPE
SPECIAL ENVOY IN MONGOLIA**

*To His Eminence Cardinal Crescenzo Sepe
Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples*

1. With great joy I write to you, Venerable Brother, as you prepare to visit for the second time the young Christian community which dwells in the vast Asian country of Mongolia, rich in history and cultural traditions.

Last July you visited Ulaanbaatar, the capital of the Mongolian nation, in order to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Mongolia and the Holy See and to highlight the lively presence in the region of a Christian community of relatively recent foundation. Although the first evangelization of Mongolia was due to the arrival of Nestorians from Persia in the seventh century, it was only in the first half of the twentieth century that a mission in that distant region was entrusted to the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The pro-Communist regime of the time at first prevented the missionaries from entering the region. With the end of the Communist dictatorship the doors were finally opened to the Gospel, and from 1991 on the first evangelizers began to arrive: priests, men and women religious, and laypersons actively engaged in the "Lord's vineyard."

To demonstrate the fruitful and positive advances made in this decade, last year witnessed two events fundamental for the life of the Church: the elevation of the Mission *sui iuris* of Urga, Ulanbator to the rank of Apostolic Prefecture with the new name of Ulaanbaatar, and the subsequent appointment of the first Apostolic Prefect in the person of the Reverend Father Wenceslaw Padilla, C.I.C.M., as well as the first ordination of three priests and a deacon who, while not natives of the country, consider Mongolia as their adopted homeland. They represent a promising sign of hope for the future of the local ecclesial community.

2. Your Eminence's return to that beloved land a little more than a year later is prompted by two

other no less important and happy events: the episcopal ordination of the Apostolic Prefect and the blessing of the Cathedral Church dedicated to the Apostles Peter and Paul. These events consolidate the spiritual edifice being built up by the "little flock" of a young missionary Church which is growing in confidence, sustained by the renewing power of the Holy Spirit.

I would dearly have liked to be present in person for these significant and historic liturgical celebrations. Since this was not part of the Lord's plan, I now entrust you with the responsibility of conveying my paternal and affectionate greetings to the new Bishop in that chosen portion of the People of God, to the other Bishops, and in a special way to Archbishop Giovanni Battista Morandini, Apostolic Nuncio in Mongolia and Apostolic Administrator. My greetings also go to the priests, the women religious, the other pastoral agents and those engaged in different charitable and humanitarian activities. I also offer a cordial greeting to all the members of the Catholic community, the baptized, the catechumens and the "sympathizers", especially the children, adolescents and young adults, who are the future and the hope of the Church and the society of that noble country.

Finally, I ask you to present my respectful greetings to the Authorities and to all the Mongolian people, who are ever close to my heart, as well as to the representatives of the various religions, with which the Catholic Church hopes to cooperate in fruitful service to the common good. I assure everyone of a special remembrance in my prayers, and I ask Almighty God to bless the efforts being made to spread his Kingdom.

3. To Mary, Mother and Queen of Mongolia, I entrust the expectations and the hopes of the Church and the Mongolian nation, having emerged from the long winter of the Communist oppression may they look to the future with renewed confidence.

May the light of Christ accompany everyone along the journey which lies ahead. I willingly seal these good wishes with my special Apostolic Blessing which I now entrust to you, Venerable Brother, as my special representative.

From Castel Gandolfo, 22 August 2003

JOHN PAUL II