



The Holy See

JOURNEY TO INDIA

HOMILY OF PAUL VI

Bombay, St Paul Parish

Friday, 4 December 1964

Venerable Brothers, beloved sons and daughters,

Having come to this hospitable land as a pilgrim, to honour Our Lord in the Blessed Eucharist, We address Our words of greeting and of friendly concern to you, to all the Catholics, Bishops, priests and people; and indeed to the people of India.

If you ask: Who is this pilgrim? What are his motives and his intentions? We reply, We are a servant and messenger of Jesus Christ, placed by Divine Providence at the head of His Church as the successor of Saint Peter, Prince of the Apostles. Messenger of Jesus and Head of the Church are in reality one function only, since the Church's reason for existing is to proclaim and spread the teaching of Jesus, and to continue His ministry on earth. This is Our identity and Our mission.

For a fruitful dialogue, both of us must know one another, We desire to know you better. Already We are aware of the long and glorious history of the Church in India, evangelized by the Apostle Saint Thomas, who sanctified its soil by his preaching and is acclaimed Apostle of India, and evangelized also, according to tradition, by Saint Bartholomew. We recall the fruitful apostolate of Saint Francis Xavier, and of the many other priests and religious who spread the Good News of the Gospel, and who today continue to show men the way to eternal happiness. In the secular history of your land, We know the natural goodness, the humility and the patience, of the sons of this country, your unswerving devotion to spiritual ideals; We are not ignorant of the many trials and difficulties which you undergo with fortitude and longanimity. An outstanding example of these virtues was given by the life and works of Mahatma Gandhi, whose lofty character and love of peace are known to all. Such religious disposition and a deep attachment to family life characterizes India, and in general all the peoples of Asia. We respectfully

greet the entire Asian continent, of which India is so typical a component, in variety of races and cultures, in efforts towards genuine progress, in heartfelt desire and promotion of peace among the nations of the world.

We come to you as a messenger of Jesus and his teaching. Many of you know His life and doctrine and, like Mahatma Gandhi, express reverence for Jesus and admiration for His teaching. «I am the light of the world», Jesus said; and today the world stands in great need of this Light, to overcome the strife and division, and the menace of unprecedented violence, which threaten to engulf mankind. The people of India and of Asia can draw light and strength from the teaching and spirit of Jesus, from His love and compassion, in their efforts to help the less fortunate, to practise brotherly love, to attain peace among themselves and with their neighbours.

This is the mission of the Church here, and We are deeply grateful for the freedom assured to the preachers of the Gospel in your country. They communicate the message of Jesus with highest respect for the convictions of others, in the language and cultural expressions of the people, and encourage Christians to express their faith and devotion in harmony with the civilization of India and in truly Indian forms. Thus the Church, having gathered the varied treasures of many cultures of East and West, will be further enriched by the contribution of her Indian sons, drawn from their country's rich and ancient cultural tradition.

Beloved sons and daughters, and all the people of India! In this simple discourse, We have touched on many points of contact, on several sentiments which we have in common. Hence, We do not feel Ourselves a stranger among you. The Pope is at home wherever the Church is at home. The Church everywhere is closely united to the people in all their efforts for the betterment of the nation.

With all Our heart, We desire the prosperity and progress of the people of India; and, insofar as it is possible for Us, We have helped and will continue to help them. We shall never cease to pray that God Almighty and Our Lord Jesus Christ may pour down upon the rulers and people of this noble nation an abundance of divine blessings, especially the high gift of peace, in justice and brotherly love.