



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. MR OWART SUTHIWART-NARUEPUT
AMBASSADOR OF THAILAND TO THE HOLY SEE***

Friday, 9 March 1984

Mr Ambassador,

it gives me great pleasure to welcome you today as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Thailand. Your presence underlines and consolidates further the excellent relations between the Holy See and the Thai people and their leaders.

I am particularly grateful for the kind greetings which you have conveyed to me on behalf of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, and I would ask you to assure His Majesty of my sincere respect, as also of my prayerful best wishes for his well-being and that of the Royal Family.

You rightly referred to the cherished ideals of freedom - including religious liberty -, mutual respect, tolerance and understanding which the Thai people have fostered and enjoyed for so many centuries, and which form part of the very fabric of social life in your country. Underlying this rich heritage there is, as you say, a deep awareness of the dignity and value of every human being - an awareness closely related to the religious beliefs of the great majority of Thais. The Christian faith has found itself perfectly at home, and strives to collaborate in every way in making these ideals a reality for more and more of the world's peoples, especially where their lack is most keenly felt. It is a source of joy to note your mention of the contribution of Christians to Thai society, especially in the fields of health and education.

Mr Ambassador, as you begin your mission as the representative of your country to the Holy See, there is one concern above all others which I would mention, a matter that especially occupies the thoughts and activities of public officials: the theme of peace. There are so many grave and serious threats to peace in our contemporary world. However, in my *Message for the World Day of*

Peace on January 1, 1984, I also drew attention to certain positive signs that are already piercing the darkness. These include a growing awareness of the "indispensable solidarity which links peoples and nations, for the solution of the majority of the great problems". The role of diplomacy is to assist the strengthening of this solidarity by presenting the various positions with clarity and objectivity, and by seeking ways to overcome obstacles without recourse to violence.

In this respect I appreciate the role that Thailand fulfils, especially in Asia, in promoting an outlook that upholds the value of peace among nations and respect for the unique dignity of every human being. It is my prayer that Almighty God will continue to bless the leaders of your country in their high responsibilities.

I eagerly await my visit to Thailand. I look forward to experiencing, however briefly, the richness of its culture and the goodness of its people. I earnestly pray that my visit will bring encouragement to the Catholic community, and that it will be seen as a concrete expression of my respect for other religious traditions. I also look forward to the honour of meeting His Majesty the King and the members of the Royal Family, as well as the political and religious leaders of your country.

May Almighty God sustain you and give you much happiness, Mr Ambassador, in the fulfilment of your mission.

*AAS 76 (1984), p. 713-714.

Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II, vol. VII, 1 pp. 651-653.

L'Attività della Santa Sede 1984 pp. 197-198.

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