



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO KOREA, PAPUA NEW GUINEA,
SOLOMON ISLANDS AND THAILAND **FAREWELL CEREMONY ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II**

Don Muang Airport - Bangkok (Thailand)

Friday, 11 May 1984

*Your Royal Highness,
Mr Prime Minister,
dear Friends,*

the hour has come for me to bid farewell to Thailand, bringing to a close my all too brief visit to this enchanting land and its charming people. I wish to express my appreciation to all those who have made this visit possible.

1. In the first place, I am very grateful to *Their Majesties the King and Queen*, who extended to me the gracious invitation to visit Thailand, thus enabling me, as I have already mentioned, to return the visit which they paid to my predecessor John XXIII some twenty years ago.

Through Their Majesties' benevolence, I have had the opportunity to experience at firsthand the traditional gentleness and hospitality of the Thai people, human qualities and virtues which are exemplified remarkably in their own persons. The bond of mutual love which unites the people of Thailand to their Sovereigns is clearly evident in Their Majesties' tireless solicitude for the welfare and happiness of their subjects, which in turn earns them the enduring affection and esteem of the Thai people.

As the "Upholder of All Religions" in Thailand, His Majesty the King has shown personal concern for the free practice of religions other than Buddhism in his country. For this reason, too, I have been honoured by his invitation. His Majesty has likewise honoured me by charging *The Crown Prince* to greet me in his name and for this great gesture of respect and friendship I am deeply grateful.

2. My presence on Thai soil has also enabled me to greet *His Holiness the Supreme Patriarch* of all Buddhists in this country. It was a privilege for me to meet this venerable and revered religious leader. I am sure that our encounter augurs well for the future of Buddhist-Catholic relations, both here and throughout the world.

3. I wish to thank the *Prime Minister* and the other government Ministers and officials who extended their courtesy and cooperation to those who prepared my journey to your country. I am deeply grateful to all who helped to coordinate the programme of my visit in all its many aspects.

It was a source of particular satisfaction for me to visit the camp of South-east Asian Refugees at Phanat Nikhom. On behalf of the thousands and thousands of suffering men, women and children who have fled turmoil in their own countries to find a haven of security and tranquility in Thailand, I wish to reiterate my profound gratitude for Thailand's generous humanitarian assistance to the refugees.

4. Finally, I say goodbye and many thanks to the *beloved Catholics* of Thailand. To the Cardinal the bishops, the priests, the religious and all the dedicated laity who worked so hard both before and during my stay among you, I say a most sincere Thank You. This visit to the noble people of Thailand, and in particular to the faithful and persevering Catholics of this country, will be etched forever in my memory and in my heart. I will continue to pray for you as I do for all peoples, that God may bless you with happiness, prosperity and lasting peace.

Thailand - "Land of the Free" - I salute you.

People of Thailand - I bid you farewell.

People of Thailand - May God bless you!