



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. MSGR. EDWARD WU TSU-YU
NEW AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA
TO THE HOLY SEE***

Friday, 7 May 1993 Mr Ambassador, I am pleased to welcome you today to the Vatican as the newly appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of China. In accepting your Letters of Credence, I thank you for the greetings and good wishes which you have conveyed on behalf of His Excellency President Lee Teng-hui, and I ask you kindly to assure him of my goodwill and of my prayers for his well-being and the happiness of all his fellow-citizens. I am happy for you personally, that you find special satisfaction in following the footsteps of your own father who at one time was his country's representative to my predecessor Pope Pius XII. The memory of your father takes us back to a very difficult period of your people's history and to the moment when the Holy See's diplomatic representative was obliged to leave continental China. After a brief interlude in Hong Kong, the Holy See's diplomatic mission was welcomed in Taiwan, and a relationship was established, the deepest meaning of which is to be found in the Holy See's desire to continue to maintain close and friendly relations with the great and noble Chinese family. The Church deeply appreciates the respect for freedom of religion which the Republic of China has upheld and fostered from the beginning in relation to all its citizens, and she is grateful that as a result she has been able to fulfill her spiritual and humanitarian mission without interference or discrimination, at the service of individuals and of the country as a whole. As the Republic of China developed into a complex and highly productive society, the Catholic community too extended its efforts in the fields of education, health-care and other related social services. In pursuing her spiritual goals, the Church is always ready to cooperate in as many ways as possible in assuring the common good. As the Second Vatican Council teaches, the Church and the political community serve the personal and social vocations of the same human beings, and "this service can be more effectively rendered for the good of all, if each works better for wholesome mutual cooperation" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 76). The possible areas of cooperation extend as far as the needs of the members of the human family itself. At the beginning of this year, in greeting the Representatives of over a hundred and forty countries having diplomatic relations with the Holy See, I spoke of two sorts of evil which still hold the human family in their grip and condemn millions of human beings to an existence which harms and jeopardizes their very dignity as men and women: *war and poverty*. Despite the monumental changes which have come about on the international level in the last five years, armed conflict, with its trail of death and destruction, has not disappeared from the world's horizon. Indeed, new and terrible instances of bloody conflict and threats of violent strife are before the eyes of everyone. The Holy See cannot but hope that the leaders of nations will do everything possible to meet this challenge and definitively "*win the war*" of *peace* by establishing effective and just structures of harmonious coexistence and cooperation. And what of poverty?

Hundreds of millions of human beings are imprisoned in situations of material and moral poverty which constitute a serious attack on the value of life and strike at the heart of the peaceful development of society. To be poor is to suffer some form of exclusion from the banquet of life. There are countless ways in which this happens: through hunger, illness, homelessness, unemployment, illiteracy, to mention only a few. In my [Message for the World Day of Peace](#) this year I emphasized the threat to peace and social stability posed by poverty. The situation is all the more tragic insofar as the world does possess the technological and organizational capabilities to change this situation and to improve conditions of life. The question therefore which stands before the international community and before public authorities, especially in the developed world, is not one of resources alone. It is a question of human solidarity, a question of the vision which underlies political policies and programs at every level. It is *ultimately a question of moral responsibility*. Through its presence in the international community, the Holy See seeks to keep before public opinion the ethical and moral dimensions of public life: the demands of justice, the dignity of the individual, the inviolability of human rights, the nature of the family as the fundamental cell of society, the universal destination of the world's goods, the duties of States and other corporate bodies to serve the integral wellbeing of people. In this regard I wish to recall what I said at the meeting with the Diplomatic Corps to which I have already referred: "The Catholic Church, present in every nation of the earth, and the Holy See, a member of the international community, in no way wish to impose judgments or precepts, but merely to give the witness of their concept of man and history, which they know comes from a divine Revelation. Society cannot afford to forgo this original contribution without becoming the poorer for it and without violating the freedom of thought and expression of a large part of its citizens" (John Paul II, *Address to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See*, 7, 16 January 1993). It is here, Mr Ambassador, that your reference to the achievements of traditional Chinese philosophy and culture is particularly appropriate. The encounter between Chinese humanism and Catholicism has given rise to a very profound and fruitful exchange, not least in the life and work of Matteo Ricci whom you mentioned, but in a continuing way in the Catholic community in your own country and elsewhere. It is my earnest hope that this cultural and moral dialogue will advance at the deepest level, at the level of the vital questions facing all individuals and societies: the meaning of life and the path which leads to fulfilling that meaning. The Church intends to be a loyal partner in such a dialogue, with no pretence of privilege or exclusiveness, aiming only at the truth and acting only out of genuine love for the human family. Mr Ambassador, your mission as Representative of your country to the Holy See will reflect the special nature of the diplomacy involved: not questions of power or commercial interest, but the promotion of man's unique dignity and vocation, and the fostering of justice and peace in international relations. I assure you of the cooperation of the various departments of the Holy See in the exercise of your lofty duties. I pray that you will be happy here, and that you and your family will have many reasons for joy and satisfaction. Upon you and your fellow citizens I invoke an abundance of divine

blessings.

* *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, vol. XVI, 1 p. 1089-1092. *L'Attività della Santa Sede* 1993 p. 383-385. *L'Osservatore Romano* 8.5.1993 p.5. *L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly edition in English* n.20 p.10. © Copyright 1993 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana