



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO H. E. MR VIDHYA RAYANANONDA
NEW AMBASSADOR OF THE KINGDOM OF THAILAND
TO THE HOLY SEE***

Thursday, 13 January 1994

Mr. Ambassador,

It is a distinct pleasure for me to welcome you to the Vatican today and to receive the Letters of Credence whereby His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej names you Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of Thailand to the Holy See. I am grateful for the cordial greetings and good wishes you bring from His Majesty and for the sentiments of esteem which you have so kindly expressed on your own behalf and in the name of your fellow-citizens. I wish to take this occasion to affirm once more my own deep respect for the Thai people, and I ask you to convey to Their Majesties the King and Queen the assurance of my fervent prayers for their health and well-being, and for that of all the members of the Royal Family. I especially ask Almighty God to bless your country abundantly with peace and prosperity.

Catholics in Thailand feel, I know, a strong sense of gratitude to their Sovereign for the care and solicitude with which he discharges his role as the "Upholder of All Religions". Secure in the free practice of their faith, the members of the Church in your country can devote themselves all the more generously to fulfilling their spiritual and humanitarian mission, bearing witness in all that they say and do to God's love for mankind (Cf. Mt. 5:45). This service of neighbour, to which they are moved by divine charity, is also an expression of their patriotism, for by helping to enhance the well-being of their fellow-citizens they are effectively building up their homeland. They contribute to the common good not only by organized works of education, health care and other social services, but also by carrying out their everyday activities and duties in faithful conformity with the moral demands of the Gospel. And they look forward to every opportunity for working with followers of other religions in a spirit of mutual respect for the development of society.

Your mention of my Pastoral Visit to Thailand in 1984 revives many pleasant memories. I was particularly happy to see at first hand the culture and way of life of the Thai people, which have developed over the centuries on the basis of a venerable tradition of wisdom, which the Church looks upon with sincere respect (Cf. *Nostra Aetate*, 2). Rooted as they are in the religious insight that the passing things of this world cannot satisfy the longings of the human heart and that true happiness can only be achieved through spiritual purification, Thai traditions provide a firm foundation for rejecting a merely utilitarian model of development. They can help to ensure the integrity of your precious civilization against the forces of consumerism and materialism. The true progress of individuals and of society is, as I wrote in my Encyclical Letter "*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*", "measured and oriented to the reality and vocation of man seen in his totality, namely according to his interior dimension" (John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 29). Recognition that the apex of human development is spiritual does not hinder a people's tireless efforts to provide its members with their rightful share in the goods of this world. Rather, the truth about every person's inalienable dignity and worth should move them to achieve that just measure of material things which will sustain, without impeding, the search for transcendence.

Authentic development is the prerequisite for the flowering of peace. Development must be at the service of the human subject. It should extend the range of people's freedom and help them to use their liberty well, in acts of virtue. When individuals pursue moral goodness, society can in turn shape all the cultural forms and political realities established by its members and their leaders. The freedom which is so dear to the Thai people that you proudly call your nation "the Land of the Free" finds its source, therefore, in inner liberation and self-giving service of the common good. True human liberty, which is nothing other than the freedom to do what is right and just, is the firm foundation upon which Thailand can build an ever more stable polity, while exercising its appropriate role in international affairs, especially within the region of South East Asia.

Your Excellency, your appointment as your nation's diplomatic representative marks a further stage in the cordial relations between the Kingdom of Thailand and the Holy See—a relationship which can be traced at least as far back as the seventeenth century, to the reign of King Narai the Great and the Pontificate of Pope Innocent XI. I am confident that during your term as Thailand's Ambassador the trust and understanding which has been built up over the years will be strengthened and increased, to the mutual benefit of the Church and your country. You may be sure that all the offices and departments of the Holy See will extend to you every consideration and will help you to fulfil your lofty responsibilities. Offering you my own good wishes, I invoke upon you and your loved ones abundant divine blessings.

**Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, vol. XVII, 1 p. 105-107.

L'Osservatore Romano 14.1.1994 p.9.

L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly edition in English n.4 p.8.

© Copyright 1994 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana