



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE **BOLLETTINO**

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LE LETTERE CREDENZIALI DEGLI AMBASCIATORI DI: AUSTRALIA, ZIMBABWE, SIRIA, TRINIDAD E TOBAGO, ETIOPIA, LETTONIA, ISOLE FIJI, BURUNDI, GEORGIA, VANUATU, MOLDOVA E PAKISTAN

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Alle ore 11 di questa mattina, nella Sala Clementina del Palazzo Apostolico Vaticano, il Santo Padre ha ricevuto in Udienza, in occasione della presentazione delle Lettere Credenziali le Loro Eccellenze i Signori Ambasciatori di: Australia, Zimbabwe, Siria, Trinidad e Tobago, Etiopia, Lettonia, Isole Fiji, Burundi, Georgia, Vanuatu, Moldova e Pakistan.

Di seguito pubblichiamo i discorsi consegnati dal Papa agli Ambasciatori degli Stati sopra elencati, nonché i cenni biografici essenziali di ciascuno:

• DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE D'AUSTRALIA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. IL SIGNOR JOHN JOSEPH HERRON
DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE D'AUSTRALIA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. IL SIGNOR JOHN JOSEPH HERRON

Your Excellency,

It is a pleasure for me to extend a cordial welcome to you today as I accept the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Australia to the Holy See. Though some years ago now, my pastoral visits to your country remain clearly etched in my mind. I especially recall the beatification of Mary MacKillop, that loyal daughter of the Church who, for Australians in particular, has become a model of Christian discipleship. I thank you for the greetings which you bear from the Government and the people of Australia. Please convey to them my sincere best wishes and assure them of my prayers for the peace and well-being of the nation.

The common ideals and human values with which both the Holy See and Australia seek to confront the problems facing humanity today must continue to find resonance even in societies marked by strong individualism and increasing secularism. In this regard, the Holy See's diplomatic mission seeks to present a vision of hope to an increasingly divided world. The Church's commitment to this aim, seen in her defence of the dignity of human life and the promotion of human rights, social justice and solidarity, arises out of the recognition of the common origin of all people and points to their common destiny. In this perspective the transcendent dimension of life works to counter tendencies towards social fragmentation and isolation so sadly prevalent in many societies today.

Solidarity with developing nations is a well known and laudable trait of your people. Involvement of Australians in peace-keeping missions, their generous assistance with aid projects and more recently their support of the newly independent nation of East Timor, all speak well of their desire to contribute to the international security and stability necessary for authentic social and economic advancement. Drawing on the strength of Australia's many years of sound diplomacy, her emerging role as a leader in the Asia-Pacific region gives your nation the opportunity to become an increasingly important agent of peace for those countries seeking a maturity in international solidarity. This has been particularly noted in the wake of acts of terrorism which tragically shatter the hopes for world peace.

Acts of solidarity are more than just unilateral humanitarian acts of good intent. True humanitarianism recognizes and expresses God's universal plan for humanity. It is only in accord with this vision of worldwide solidarity that

the complex challenges of justice, freedom of peoples and the peace of humanity can be effectively addressed (cf. *Familiaris Consortio*, 48). At the heart of this vision is the belief that all men and women receive their essential and common dignity from God and the capacity to transcend every social order so as to move towards truth and goodness (cf. *Centesimus Annus* 38). It is in this light that your dialogues and partnerships with those countries north of your continent, which do not share a Christian heritage, will find their proper and stable foundation. Similarly, it is only within this perspective of the essential unity of mankind that the trying difficulties associated with the reception of refugees and with the lingering question of Aboriginal land rights will find compassionate and truly humanitarian solutions.

Your Excellency has observed that tolerance is a further trait of the people of Australia. Indeed this characteristic has endeared many to your land and is reflected in the integration of the multiple ethnic communities now found there. The respect due to all persons does not however find its origin simply in the fact of differences between peoples. From the understanding of the true nature of life as gift stems the requirement that men and women must respect the natural and moral structure with which they have been endowed by God (cf. *Centesimus Annus*, 38). While political emphasis on human subjectivity has certainly focused on individual rights, it is sometimes the case that tendencies of "political correctness" seem to neglect that "men and women are called to direct their steps towards a truth which transcends them" (*Fides et Ratio*, 5). Sundered from that truth, which is the only guarantee of freedom and happiness, individuals are at the mercy of caprice and undifferentiated pluralism, slowly losing the capacity to lift their gaze to the heights of the meaning of human life.

In Australia, as in many other countries, the struggle to interpret choices of lifestyle in relation to God's plan for humanity is manifested in the pressures facing marriage and family life. The sacredness of marriage must be upheld by both religious and civic bodies. Secular and pragmatic distortions of the reality of marriage can never overshadow the splendour of a life-long covenant based on generous self-giving and unconditional love. This splendid vision of marriage and stable family life offers to society as a whole a foundation upon which the aspirations of a nation can be anchored.

For her part the Catholic Church in Australia will continue to provide support for family life, through which the future of humanity passes (cf. *Familiaris Consortio*, 86). She is already heavily involved in the spiritual and intellectual formation of the young especially through her schools. Additionally her social apostolate extends to those facing some of the serious problems of modern society – alcohol, drugs, behavioural addiction – and I am confident that the Church will continue to respond generously to new social challenges as they arise.

Your Excellency, I know that your mission will serve to strengthen further the bonds of friendship which already exist between Australia and the Holy See. As you take up your new responsibilities I assure you that the various offices of the Roman Curia are ready to assist you in the fulfillment of your duties. Upon you, your family and fellow citizens, I cordially invoke the abundant blessings of Almighty God.

S.E. il Signor John Joseph Herron Ambasciatore d'Australia presso la Santa Sede

È nato a Home Hill (North Queensland).

È sposato ed ha avuto 10 figli.

Ha iniziato a lavorare a 16 anni, frequentando contemporaneamente una scuola serale ed ottenendo a 18 anni il diploma e la borsa di studio necessari per l'iscrizione alla Facoltà di Medicina dell'Università del Queensland, laureandosi nel 1956. In seguito si è recato in Gran Bretagna (Edimburgo e Londra) per corsi di specializzazione.

Rientrato in Australia, ha continuato la professione medica e la ricerca scientifica sul cancro.

Nel 1963 è stato nominato Primo Membro della Fondazione per la Ricerca sul Cancro e Membro del *Royal Australasian College* dei Chirurghi.

Nel 1974 ha ottenuto il grado di Primario ospedaliero ed ha svolto tale ruolo fino al 1990, quando è stato eletto Senatore per il Partito Liberale, di cui era stato Vicepresidente (1976-1979) e Presidente (1980-1983) per il Queensland.

Il 1° luglio 1990 è stato chiamato alla Presidenza della Commissione Parlamentare per gli Affari Comunitari. Nel 1994 ha lasciato per due mesi il Senato, per recarsi come medico volontario nello Zaire in un campo di profughi rwandesi. E' stato in seguito insignito della "Medaglia al Servizio Umanitario".

Dall'11 marzo 1996 al 30 gennaio 2001 è stato Ministro per gli Aborigeni.

Nel 2001 è stato rieletto Presidente del Partito Liberale per il Queensland ed il 10 novembre 2001 ha di nuovo vinto le elezioni a Senatore.

Dal 2002 è Ambasciatore in Irlanda, ove risiede.

Oltre alla professione medica ed all'attività politica, è noto per l'impegno sociale.

[00752-02.01] [Original text: English]

• DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DELLO ZIMBABWE PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. IL SIGNOR KELEBERT NKOMANI

Mr Ambassador,

I offer you a warm welcome to the Vatican as I accept the letters by which you are accredited Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Zimbabwe to the Holy See. I am pleased to receive the greetings and good wishes which you bring from the President, Government and people of your nation, and I ask you kindly to convey to them my own prayerful good wishes. Although many years have passed since my visit to your country, I still have fond memories of the days I happily spent among your fellow Zimbabweans, experiencing their warmth and hospitality, sharing their joys and aspirations. On the occasion of that visit I spoke of Africa as a "continent of hope and promise for the future of mankind" (Speech at Arrival Ceremony in Harare, 10 September 1988, 1): it is my fervent desire that, in this new millennium, that hope and promise will become a reality for the people of Zimbabwe and for all the peoples of Africa.

Your kind tribute to Archbishop Patrick Chakaipa, who passed away only last month, are very much appreciated, and I am grateful also for your recognition of the significant contribution made by the institutions of the Catholic Church to Zimbabwean society at large, particularly in the fields of education, health care and social services. Indeed, the Church sees her apostolate in these areas as an essential element of her religious mission, and she is ever eager to carry out this work in harmony with others who are active in the same fields. Cooperation between Church and State is of great importance in advancing the intellectual and moral training of citizens, who will then be better equipped to build a truly just and stable society. This is part of the contribution that the Church seeks to make to the human development of individuals and peoples, especially those who are most in need.

It is this same commitment that motivates the Holy See in its diplomatic activity. In working with other members of the international community, the Holy See strives to foster peace and harmony among peoples, looking always to the common good and the integral development of individuals and nations. The task of diplomacy nowadays is increasingly determined by the challenges of globalization and the new threats to world peace which this entails. The key questions no longer concern territorial sovereignty — borders and jurisdiction over certain land areas — even if in some parts of the world this remains a problem. By and large, the threats to stability and peace in the world today are extreme poverty, social inequalities, political corruption and abuse of authority, ethnic tensions, the absence of democracy, the failure to respect human rights. These are some of the situations which diplomacy is called to address.

There is no country in the world which does not face one or more of these problems. For this reason, the values

of democracy, good government, human rights, dialogue and peace must be close to the heart of leaders and peoples. The more these values form a fundamental part of a nation's ethos, the greater will be that nation's capacity to build a future worthy of the human dignity of its citizens. Moreover, the globalization of these values represents the globalization of solidarity, which aims to ensure that economic and social benefits are enjoyed by all on a planetary scale. This is a sure way of working for peace in today's world. Conversely, when these values are neglected or, worse, actively violated, no programme of economic or social reform will enjoy long-term success. Instead, social and political violence will eventually increase, the gap between rich and poor will grow ever wider, and government leadership itself will be unable to create an environment that fosters truth, justice, love and freedom.

Utmost vigilance is therefore called for in safeguarding the rights and protecting the welfare of all citizens. Public authorities must refrain from exercising partiality, preferential treatment or selective justice in favour of certain individuals or groups; this ultimately undermines the credibility of those charged with governing. In his famous Encyclical Letter *Pacem in Terris*, my predecessor Blessed Pope John XXIII, quoting Pope Leo XIII, summed up the situation thus: "The civil power must not serve the advantage of any one individual or of some few persons, inasmuch as it was established for the common good of all" (par. 56). In fact, when everyone is treated on an equal basis — a *sine qua non* for a society firmly based on the rule of law — the value, gifts and talents of each member are more easily recognized and can be more effectively tapped for building up the community. As traditional wisdom handed down in an African proverb has put it: *Gunwe rimwe haritswanyi inda* (many hands make work lighter).

Making reference to your Government's land reform programme, Your Excellency has remarked that this is a vehicle for improving the people's standard of living, achieving equity and establishing social justice. In many countries, such agrarian reform is necessary, as noted in the document "Towards a Better Distribution of Land" published in 1997 by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, but it is also a complex and delicate process. In fact, as this same document points out, it is an error to think that any real benefit or success will come simply by expropriating large landholdings, dividing them into smaller production units and distributing them to others (cf. No. 45). There are first of all matters of justice to be considered, with due weight being given to the various claims of land ownership, the right to land use and the common good. Moreover, if land redistribution is to offer a practical and sustainable response to serious economic and social problems in a given country, the process must continue to develop over time and must ensure that the necessary infrastructures are in place. Finally, and no less important, "indispensable for the success of an agrarian reform is that it should be in full accord with national policies and those of international bodies" (*ibid.*).

Feelings of disenfranchisement or of being unjustly treated only serve to foment tension and discord. Justice must be made available to all if the injuries of the past are to be left behind and a brighter future built. Insofar as the authentic common good prevails, the fundamental causes of civil strife will disappear. The Catholic Church pledges her full support for all efforts to construct a culture of dialogue rather than confrontation, of reconciliation rather than conflict. This in fact is an integral part of her mission to advance the authentic good of all peoples and of the whole person.

Mr Ambassador, as you enter the family of diplomats accredited to the Holy See, I assure you of the ready assistance of the various offices and agencies of the Roman Curia. I am confident that your mission will strengthen the bonds of understanding and friendship between us. Upon yourself and the beloved people of Zimbabwe I cordially invoke the abundant blessings of Almighty God.

S.E. il Signor Kelebert Nkomani S.E. il Signor Kelebert Nkomani **Ambasciatore dello Zimbabwe presso la Santa Sede**

È nato a Bulalimangwe il 1° giugno 1949.

È sposato ed ha tre figli.

Laureato in Economia nel 1979, ha conseguito nel 1981 un Master (Università di Bombay). Ha intrapreso la carriera diplomatica nel 1981, ricoprendo i seguenti incarichi: Funzionario del Ministero dell'Industria e della

Tecnologia (1981-1984); Assistente del Ministero dell'Industria e della Tecnologia (1984-1989); Sotto-Segretario del Ministero del Commercio (1989-1992); Ministro per l'Industria ed il Commercio (1992 - agosto 1999).

Dal 1999 è Ambasciatore in Belgio, ove risiede. È anche accreditato in Olanda, Lussemburgo e presso l'Unione Europea.

[00753-02.01] [Original text: English]

• DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DELLA REPUBBLICA ARABA DI SIRIA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. LA SIGNORA SIBA NASSER

Madame l'Ambassadeur,

1. Je suis heureux d'accueillir Votre Excellence au Vatican en cette circonstance solennelle de la présentation des Lettres qui L'accréditent en qualité d'Ambassadeur extraordinaire et plénipotentiaire de la République Arabe Syrienne près le Saint-Siège. Je vous remercie des salutations courtoises que vous m'avez adressées de la part de Son Excellence Monsieur Bachar Al Assad, Président de la République, et je vous saurais gré de bien vouloir Lui exprimer en retour mes vœux cordiaux pour sa personne, ainsi que pour le bonheur et la prospérité du peuple syrien.

2. Vous avez évoqué la visite que j'ai accomplie dans votre pays à l'occasion de mon pèlerinage jubilaire sur les pas de saint Paul. Je rends grâce à Dieu de m'avoir permis de me rendre à Damas, où l'Apôtre Paul fut accueilli pour la première fois par la communauté chrétienne après sa conversion et où l'on garde également la mémoire du martyr de saint Jean-Baptiste. J'ai pu, à cette occasion, rencontrer de hauts responsables de l'Islam, manifestant ainsi l'importance du dialogue entre les religions pour servir la cause de la paix, comme je l'ai fait d'une manière encore plus large quelques mois après, lors de la *Journée de prière* à Assise le 24 janvier 2002, en affirmant solennellement qu'on ne pouvait légitimer la violence au nom de Dieu et que les religions voulaient servir le bien de l'homme et de la paix.

3. Comment ne pas évoquer devant vous la grave situation de tension qui caractérise les relations internationales actuelles ? Le déchaînement aveugle de la violence terroriste, manifesté le 11 septembre 2001, a conduit tous les responsables à un examen attentif de l'état du monde et à une prise de conscience nouvelle de la fragilité des équilibres. La guerre, qui a de nouveau prévalu, ne peut être considérée comme moyen de résoudre les conflits; elle atteint gravement les personnes et elle entraîne le monde dans des déséquilibres profonds. Vous le savez, Madame l'Ambassadeur, le Saint-Siège n'a cessé de rappeler que la recherche des causes profondes du terrorisme s'imposait à tous, pour permettre de lutter efficacement contre ce phénomène, qui met en danger de manière insupportable le bien commun de la paix, de la dignité des personnes et des peuples. Il a aussi manifesté son attachement indéfectible à la concertation entre les nations, dans le cadre des instances internationales légitimes, pour éviter toute action unilatérale qui risque de conduire à un affaiblissement du droit international et qui fragilise le pacte existant entre les nations. La recherche de la paix implique, nous le croyons, un dialogue franc et approfondi entre responsables, en ayant le souci de rechercher, avec la participation des institutions internationales, le consensus le plus large, afin d'éviter tout esprit de vengeance et toute tentation de surenchère violente, susceptibles de déchaîner un mal plus grand. Ce dialogue demande aussi aux parties impliquées de savoir se remettre en cause, pour combattre effectivement les situations d'injustice ou de domination qui engendrent dans les populations des sentiments d'hostilité ou de haine, difficiles ensuite à déraciner.

4. Votre pays, Madame l'Ambassadeur, est directement concerné par le conflit qui ensanglante depuis des années le Moyen-Orient et la Terre sainte, cette région du monde chère à tous les croyants et si souvent objet de conflits au cours de l'histoire. Comment ne pas entendre les légitimes aspirations de tous les peuples qui y résident aujourd'hui à disposer d'eux-mêmes, à vivre enfin sur leur sol dans la dignité et la sécurité, dans l'indépendance et la souveraineté véritables, pour tenir leur place légitime dans le concert des nations, en y apportant leurs richesses propres ? Il faut souhaiter à tous les dirigeants de cette région du monde un esprit courageux et audacieux pour ne pas se laisser décourager par les échecs déjà subis et pour garder fermement le cap d'une recherche authentique de la paix, dans le respect de la justice. Appréciant l'attention, dont vous

venez de vous faire l'écho, portée par votre gouvernement aux efforts du Saint-Siège en faveur de la paix, je vous assure que ce dernier continuera à œuvrer sans relâche dans ce sens, demandant pour le bien des peuples eux-mêmes que la communauté internationale redouble d'efforts et qu'elle prenne ses responsabilités par rapport à ce trop long conflit, aidant plus efficacement les protagonistes à retrouver le chemin indispensable d'un véritable dialogue, en vue de la paix (cf. *Message pour la Journée mondiale de la Paix 2003*, n. 7). Je ne doute pas que votre pays, actuellement membre du Conseil de Sécurité de l'Organisation des Nations unies, travaille lui aussi activement à cette fin, selon les principes que vous venez justement d'évoquer.

5. Votre présence ici me donne l'occasion de saluer la communauté catholique de Syrie, que j'ai eu la joie de rencontrer lors de mon pèlerinage jubilaire. Je sais que ses membres, bien qu'ils soient peu nombreux, ont à cœur de prendre part au développement économique et social de leur pays, et de tenir leur place dans la vie de la nation, en y témoignant des valeurs de responsabilité, de liberté et de dignité de la personne que leur inspire l'idéal évangélique. Qu'ils sachent que le Successeur de Pierre les encourage tous, pasteurs et fidèles, à persévérer dans leur désir de relations fraternelles avec leurs frères chrétiens d'autres confessions et dans leur souci de dialogue avec les musulmans !

6. Madame l'Ambassadeur, vous inaugurez aujourd'hui la noble mission de représenter votre pays auprès du Saint-Siège. Veuillez accepter les souhaits que je forme pour son heureuse réussite et soyez assurée de trouver auprès de mes collaborateurs un accueil attentif et une compréhension cordiale !

Sur Votre Excellence, sur ses collaborateurs, ainsi que sur le peuple de Syrie, j'invoque de grand cœur l'abondance des Bénédiction du Très-Haut.

S.E la Signora Siba Nasser S.E la Signora Siba NasserAmbasciatore della Repubblica Araba di Siria presso la Santa Sede

Ènata a Lattaquié nel 1941.

Ènubile.

Laureata in Diritto presso l'Università di Damasco, ha intrapreso la carriera diplomatica nel 1965, ricoprendo i seguenti incarichi: Addetto di Ambasciata a Berna (1966-1968); Console e membro della Delegazione Permanente presso l'Ufficio delle Nazioni Unite di Ginevra (1968-1971); Funzionario dell'Ufficio Informazione del Ministero degli Affari Esteri (1971-1975); Funzionario dell'Ufficio Studi presso il medesimo Ministero (1975-1980); Consigliere di Ambasciata di Parigi (1980-1982); Ministro Consigliere di Ambasciata di Bruxelles (1983-1986); Ambasciatore presso i Paesi del Benelux e presso l'Unione Europea (1987-1993); Direttore dell'Ufficio Studi del Ministero degli Affari Esteri (1993-1995); Direttore della Sezione per l'Europa Occidentale del Ministero degli Affari Esteri (1995-1999); Assistente del Ministro degli Affari Esteri per l'Europa e per l'Ufficio Studi degli Affari culturali (2000-2002)

Dal 2002 è Ambasciatore in Francia, ove risiede.

[00754-03.01] [Texte original: Français]

• DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DI TRINIDAD E TOBAGO PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. IL SIGNOR LEARI E. ROUSSEAU

Your Excellency,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Vatican as you present the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago to the Holy See. Though my visit to your country took place some years ago now, I well remember the warmth and hospitality with which I was received. I would ask you kindly to express my sincere best wishes to His Excellency President Richards, to the Prime Minister and the Government, and to all the people of your beloved country. Please convey to them my gratitude for their greetings and assure them of my prayers for the nation's peace and

prosperity.

The Holy See's steadfast commitment to promoting the dignity of the human person stands at the heart of all her diplomatic activity. Without the fundamental recognition and protection of the incomparable worth of the human person, efforts to attain peaceful coexistence among peoples of differing ethnic groups and religious traditions are in vain. In this regard it gladdens me to note your country's appreciation of the urgent need for the entire human family – from individuals to countries, from regional organizations to international alliances – to give tangible and practical expression to what my predecessor, Blessed Pope John XXIII, identified as the four pillars of peace: truth, justice, love and freedom. The efficacy and indeed necessity of these pillars for peace stem directly from their being "four precise requirements of the human spirit" (*Message for the 2003 World Day of Peace*, 3). Building peace in our world thus finds its sure basis in respect for the inviolable dignity of every person.

In a multi-cultural and multi-religious society such as that found in your own country, the imperative of recognizing and protecting the intrinsic dignity and distinctiveness of every human being is keenly felt. Furthermore, the quest to achieve national unity through diversity and social harmony through tolerance, when firmly anchored in a willingness to defend the values rooted in the very nature of the human person, becomes not just a matter of passive acceptance but a means of active cultural enrichment for all. Indeed when cultural and religious differences are treasured as gifts, they disclose the hand of God who creates every man and women in his own image, and who alone bestows the fullness of unity upon the human family.

Authentic economic development, which always contains a moral aspect, is also of crucial importance to the well-being and peaceful progress of a nation. It is here that the demand for justice is satisfied (cf. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 10). The right to meaningful work and an acceptable standard of living, the assurance of a fair distribution of goods and wealth, and the responsible use of natural resources all depend upon a concept of development which is not limited to merely satisfying material necessities. Instead, such a concept must also highlight the dignity of the human person – who is the proper subject of all development – and thereby enhance the common good of all humanity. While such a goal certainly demands the support of the entire international community, it is also the case that much can be achieved at the level of regional development. This requires that excessive nationalism be laid to rest so that the profound value of communal solidarity be permitted to find expression in local agreements conducive to regional economic and social cooperation.

Mr Ambassador, as you have remarked, the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, like many people in our world, though remaining confident about the hope of tomorrow are nevertheless suffering from acute social problems. The assault on family life, which seems tragically to be a sign of our times, takes on many forms. One of the most pernicious of these is undoubtedly the trade and use of drugs, representing a grave threat to the social fabric. They fuel crime and violence, contribute to the desolation of family life and to the physical and emotional destruction of many individuals and communities, especially among the young (cf. *Ecclesia in America*, 24). The ensuing degradation of the person betrays the nature of life as gift and undermines the meaning of the fullness of life revealed to us by Jesus Christ. For these reasons I have stressed on many occasions that "here we are facing one of the most urgent challenges which many nations around the world need to address" (*ibid*).

For her part, in proclaiming the Gospel of life received from her Lord (cf. *Evangelium Vitae*, 2) the Catholic Church ardently desires to promote among all peoples, and in a special way among the young, the culture of truth and love which leads to authentic freedom and happiness. To this end, both civic and religious institutions must work together to ensure that the sacred institution of marriage, with its concomitant of stable family life, is upheld and supported wholeheartedly. Any hope for renewal of society which does not adhere to God's plan for marriage and the family is destined to flounder (cf. *Familiaris Consortio*, 3), for it is within family life that the God-given dignity of every person is first realized and experienced. But when this dignity is affirmed through principles of equality and respect for the common good, and protected through the maintenance of law and order and by honest governance, society cannot fail to flourish. Motivated by love, the Catholic Church in Trinidad and Tobago will thus continue to support marriage and family life and uphold it as the "most effective means for humanizing and personalizing society" (*Familiaris Consortio*, 43). It is to this Gospel-inspired vision of life that her schools, health-care facilities, and other works of charity attest.

Mr Ambassador, I am confident that your mission which you begin today will help to strengthen the bonds of understanding and cooperation between Trinidad and Tobago and the Holy See. As you take up your new responsibilities I assure you that the various offices of the Roman Curia are ready to assist you in the fulfilment of your duties. Upon you and your fellow citizens I invoke the abundant blessings of Almighty God.

S.E. il Signor Leari Edgar Rousseau S.E. il Signor Leari Edgar RousseauAmbasciatore di Trinidad e Tobago presso la Santa Sede

È nato l'8 luglio 1944.

È sposato.

Ha conseguito la laurea in Economia (1970, New York) e si è specializzato in Diplomazia (1975, Oxford GB) ed in Gestione Finanziaria (1980, Londra).

Ha intrapreso la carriera diplomatica nel 1971, ricoprendo i seguenti incarichi: Funzionario presso la Divisione Politica ed Economica del Ministero degli Affari Esteri (1971); Secondo Segretario presso l'*High Commission* in Guyana (1972); Primo Segretario e successivamente Consigliere della Rappresentanza Diplomatica in Belgio e presso le Comunità Europee (1973-1979); Vice-Capo del Protocollo e Direttore dell'Amministrazione del Ministero degli Affari Esteri (1979-1985); Vice Console Generale e successivamente Console Generale a New York (1985-1995); Direttore di Divisione presso il Ministero degli Affari Esteri (1995- 1996); Facente funzioni di Segretario Permanente del Ministero degli Affari Esteri (1996-1997); Assistente Speciale del Ministro degli Affari Esteri e Direttore di Dipartimento nel medesimo Dicastero (1997-2002).

Dal 2002 è Ambasciatore in Belgio, ove risiede.

Ha partecipato a numerosi Summit, Conferenze e Negoziati in rappresentanza del suo Paese.

[00755-02.02] [Original text: English]

• DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DI ETIOPIA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. IL SIGNOR NEGASH KEBRET

Mr Ambassador,

As you present the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to the Holy See I offer you warm greetings and welcome you to the Vatican. With gratitude for the good wishes which you bring from the President and Prime Minister of your country, I ask you to convey to them my own cordial good wishes and the assurance of my prayers for the well-being of the nation. I also take this opportunity to express my whole-hearted support for the continuing peace process: it is my fervent hope that all concerned will work with courage and vision to ensure that a just and lasting peace based on mutual understanding, reconciliation and cooperation will once again be firmly established.

In this regard, I am pleased to note the active involvement of the international community as the initial cease-fire was brokered, as the subsequent agreements on the cessation of hostilities were drafted, and in offering continued assistance for the full implementation of the provisions of these accords. Particularly worthy of mention is the Ethiopian-Eritrean Boundary Commission, which has its headquarters at The Hague, and also the recent resolution of the U.N. Security Council extending the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea. There is no question as to the inestimable value of the help which the worldwide family of nations offers in this process, but this involvement in no way replaces the need for the parties immediately concerned to manifest clearly their goodwill and resolve in addressing the situation: their sincerity and commitment remain essential for overcoming any difficulties and tensions which may arise. I therefore encourage every effort aimed at restoring direct dialogue between the Ethiopian and Eritrean Governments. Only in this way can true reconciliation be achieved, leading to the normalization of relations, the re-opening of borders, mutual exchange

between populations, and a definitive end to the risk of military conflict.

The independence of States can no longer be understood apart from the concept of interdependence: in our modern world all nations are interconnected, for better or for worse. In order that relationships of mutual interdependence may become channels for effectively improving the lot of mankind in every part of the globe, leaders at all levels — whether regional, national or international — must act in accordance with universal moral principles, rejecting situations of injustice and of institutional corruption. This is nothing more than what is required by good governance. As I said earlier this year to the members of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See: "The material and spiritual well-being of humanity, the protection of the freedom and rights of the human person, selfless public service, closeness to concrete conditions: all of these take precedence over every political project and constitute a moral necessity which in itself is the best guarantee of peace within nations and peace between States" (Speech to the Diplomatic Corps, 13 January 2003, 6).

Your Excellency has mentioned the democratic and economic reforms currently under way in Ethiopia. Projects such as these, which seek to promote genuine progress in the social, economic and political spheres, call for a strong and unwavering commitment to the inalienable rights and dignity of the human person. In fact, the safeguarding of fundamental rights and respect for human dignity are the prerequisites for integral human development. The human person must ever remain the focal point of all development. And it is precisely in this area that the Church has an important contribution to make: for through her social teaching she seeks to increase moral awareness of the demands of justice and solidarity, demands predicated on the incomparable worth and centrality of the human person. Sharing with the people of our time a profound and ardent desire for a life which is just in every aspect, she does not fail to examine the various aspects of the sort of justice which the life of people and society demands (cf. *Dives in Misericordia*, 12).

A key element in the harmonious coexistence of individuals and groups is freedom of conscience, a necessary expression of which is religious freedom. Here, Your Excellency's reference to the constitutional assurance of freedom of religion in Ethiopia is most heartening. The Church herself is a tireless promoter of the right of individuals and organized religious communities to profess and practise their faith freely. In fact, respect for religious freedom serves as an indication and a guarantee of authentic social progress, and religious freedom itself is an indispensable component of any public policy which seeks to serve human dignity. It is this freedom that allows the Catholic Church in Ethiopia, always in keeping with her specific nature and mission, to be actively involved in practical efforts aimed at the improvement of society and at responding to concrete human needs.

Ethiopian Catholics are committed to working hand in hand with their fellow citizens as active participants in the political, social and cultural advancement of their nation. They do this in imitation of their Lord, who "came not to be served but to serve" (Mt 20:28). It is for this very purpose that many missionaries — members of religious communities and lay men and women — have come to your country offering their services not only in the area of Catholic ecclesial life, but also in the broader fields of education, health care and social services. The work they do is not for the benefit of Catholics alone, but for the good of all the people. It is my hope that the Government of Ethiopia and the public authorities will welcome this service on the part of the Church and will assist Catholic missionaries and others as they seek to continue these efforts aimed at the building up of Ethiopian society.

Mr Ambassador, as begin your diplomatic mission to the Holy See, please know of the readiness of the various offices and agencies of the Roman Curia to assist you in the fulfilment of your responsibilities. Assuring you of my good wishes for the success of your work, I cordially invoke upon you and upon the leaders and people of Ethiopia the abundant blessings of Almighty God.

S.E. il Signor Negash Kebret S.E. il Signor Negash Kebret Ambasciatore di Etiopia presso la Santa Sede

È nato in Addis Abeba nel 1953.

È sposato ed ha una figlia.

Laureato in Scienze Politiche (Addis Abeba, 1977), ha successivamente conseguito un Master (Ginevra, 1986) ed un Dottorato (Stoccolma, 1988) in Relazioni Internazionali.

Ha intrapreso la carriera diplomatica nel 1978, ricoprendo i seguenti incarichi: Funzionario del Ministero degli Affari Esteri, Dipartimento per l'Africa, Medio Oriente, Organizzazioni Internazionali e Paesi Non-Allineati (1978-1984); Servizio nelle Ambasciate in Ginevra (1984-1987; 1990-1993) e Stoccolma (1987-1990); Capo della Segreteria del Ministro degli Esteri (1993-1996); Direttore Generale del Dipartimento per l'Asia, l'Australia ed il Medio Oriente presso il Ministero degli Affari Esteri (1996-2000); Incaricato d'Affari a.i. dell'Ambasciata in New Delhi (2000-2002).

Dal 2002 è Ambasciatore in Israele, ove risiede.

Ha rappresentato il suo Paese in numerosi Incontri e Conferenze sulla protezione dei minori, sui Diritti Umani e sulla Cooperazione internazionale.

Parla l'amarico, il francese e l'inglese.

[00756-02.02] [Original text: English]

• DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DELLA LETTONIA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. IL SIGNOR ALBERTS SARKANIS

Mr Ambassador,

It is a pleasure for me to welcome you to the Vatican as I receive the Letters appointing you Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Latvia to the Holy See. Your presence here today evokes vivid memories of my visit to your country ten years ago, when, as "a pilgrim of peace" (Speech at Welcoming Ceremony, Riga, 8 September 1993, 4), I came among the Latvian people not long after the nation had "emerged from a painful human, political and social trial which lasted more than half a century" (*ibid.*, 3). In asking you kindly to convey my greetings to the President, Government and beloved people of Latvia, I also express the fervent hope that your country will continue to make progress along the path of freedom, social unity and peace.

In your remarks, you have referred to the Accord between the Holy See and the Republic of Latvia signed by both parties in 2000. With the ratification of this agreement last year, the Accord has now come into effect and affords a further concrete opportunity to strengthen the good relations existing between us. I am confident that, dealing with matters of common interest to us, particularly with regard to the juridical status and pastoral mission of the Catholic Church in Latvia, the prompt and full application of this Accord will serve to increase the spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation that unites us in our service of the human person. In fact, it is the personal and social vocation of the same human beings that is served both by the Church and by the political community, each in its own particular sphere and with its own particular competence. For man is not restricted to temporal realities: although he lives in a specific period of history, he is called to transcendence and is destined for eternity. It is this high calling and this final destiny which must inform and shape the social, economic and political undertakings of individuals, peoples and nations.

Catholic social teaching, inspired by the universal principles ensuring justice and peace between individuals and groups, recognizes the positive role played in the life of a nation by political and economic forces. But if progress is to be genuine, these forces must be carefully subordinated to the greater ethical demands of social justice, human rights and the common good. In this way, human dignity will be defended, solidarity between individuals and groups will be encouraged, social harmony and prosperity will be fostered. In short, "the material and spiritual well-being of humanity, the protection of the freedom and rights of the human person, selfless public service, closeness to concrete conditions: all of these take precedence over every political project and constitute a moral necessity which in itself is the best guarantee of peace within nations and peace between States" (Speech to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, 13 January 2003, 6).

The values of which we are speaking here are no stranger to your country: ever since the twelfth century, when Saint Meinhard, the Apostle of Latvia, preached the Gospel in your land, these ideals have been woven into the

very fabric of your national life. They must be ever strengthened and fostered as Latvia continues its journey into the Third Millennium and as your nation prepares to become a full-fledged member of an enlarged European Union. In this regard, I am pleased by your observation on the profound impact that Christianity has had on European history and culture. Indeed, Christianity holds a unique claim to a privileged position among the values that will forge and give cohesion to a new Europe: for "a Europe which disavowed its past, which denied the fact of religion, and which had no spiritual dimension would be extremely impoverished in the face of the ambitious project which calls upon all its energies: constructing a Europe for all" (*ibid.*, 5).

It is for this reason that the Holy See urges that the future Constitutional Treaty of the European Union should contain in the Preamble explicit reference to religion and to the Christian heritage of Europe. It would in fact seem desirable that, in full respect for the secular state, this Constitution should recognize three complementary elements: first, the importance of religious freedom, not only in its individual and collective aspects, but also in its institutional dimension; second, the need for dialogue and consultation between the European Union and communities of believers; third, respect for the juridical status already enjoyed by Churches and religious institutions within member States of the Union. These three interrelated principles will enable religion in general and Christianity in particular to continue to make an irreplaceable contribution to European life and institutions.

Of course, essential to any programme of authentic progress and integral human development, whether in Europe or elsewhere, is the family. In the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights the family is recognized as "the natural and fundamental group unit of society", and this same document states unequivocally that the family "is entitled to protection by society and the State" (Article 16.3). This is an essential truth of human social existence which must not be overlooked or underestimated, for any weakening of this indispensable institution cannot fail to be a potential source of grave difficulties and problems. For example, when a utilitarian and materialistic notion of the family prevails, its members will tend to have self-centred expectations and to make individualistic demands that are detrimental to the family's unity and undermine its ability to build harmony and educate in solidarity. On the other hand, where the family is seen as a value in itself, the members realize that their personal good coincides with their duty to love, respect and help one other.

The same is true of human life itself and of individual human beings. When the value, dignity and rights of the human person are upheld and promoted, the social fabric is strengthened and the priorities of peoples and nations are set in proper order. This is why the Church will never tire of reminding consciences that life at every stage of its existence, from conception to natural death, must be rigorously and uncompromisingly defended. Likewise, the human person at all stages of life — during childhood, as an adult and in old age — is a priceless treasure to be cared for and cherished. Neither human life nor the human person can ever legitimately be treated as an object, as a possession, but must be seen as endowed by the Creator with a most sublime dignity that demands the greatest respect and vigilance on the part of individuals, communities, nations and international bodies.

Mr Ambassador, I am confident that the bonds of friendship that unite the Holy See and the Republic of Latvia will grow ever stronger and will prove helpful in laying the Christian foundation upon which the Europe of the Third Millennium is to be built. As you begin your mission I assure you that the various offices of the Roman Curia are ready to offer whatever assistance you may need in carrying out your high responsibilities. Upon yourself and the beloved people of Latvia I invoke the abundant blessings of Almighty God.

S.E. il Signor Alberts Sarkanis S.E. il Signor Alberts SarkanisAmbasciatore della Lettonia presso la Santa Sede

È nato a Daugavpils il 6 aprile 1960.

È sposato ed ha tre figli.

Laureato in Filologia all'Università della Lettonia (1984), ha seguito corsi di *Management* a Riga (1995, 2001, 2002) e Stoccolma (1997).

Ha ricoperto, tra gli altri, i seguenti incarichi: Ricercatore presso l'Accademia delle Scienze della Lettonia (1980-1990); Lettore presso la Facoltà di Pedagogia (Università della Lettonia, 1988-1989); Incaricato d'Affari a.i.

(1990-1993) e successivamente Ambasciatore (1993-1996) in Lituania; Capo della delegazione lettone per la rideterminazione dei confini con la Lituania (1994-1997); Sottosegretario del Ministero degli Affari Esteri (1996-1998); Ambasciatore presso la Repubblica di Finlandia (1998-2000);

Dal 2001 è Ispettore Generale del Ministero degli Affari Esteri. Risiede a Riga.

Parla il lituano, l'inglese, il polacco e il russo.

[00757-02.02] [Original text: English]

• DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DELLE ISOLE FIJI PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. IL SIGNOR EMITAI LAUSIKI BOLADUADUA

Mr Ambassador,

I am pleased to accept the Letters of Credence appointing you Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of the Fiji Islands to the Holy See. I reciprocate most cordially the greetings and good wishes which you have brought from President Ratu Josefa Iloilovatu Uluivuda and from all the people of Fiji. My stay in your country in 1986, and the warm welcome which I received, are among my most cherished memories of my Pastoral Visit to Oceania. I take this occasion to assure you of my constant prayers for your nation as it strives to build a harmonious and unified society marked by authentic pluralism and full respect for the racial, cultural and religious diversity of its members.

You have frankly mentioned the difficulties which led to the political crisis of May 2000 and the resolute will of the people of Fiji to make their differences a source of mutual enrichment rather than a motive for division and contention. The efforts which your nation has made to confront the real challenges to national unity in a spirit of honesty, dialogue and constructive cooperation are positive signs of a readiness to look to the future with confidence and determination. At the time of my Pastoral Visit, I encouraged all Fijians "to pursue the paths of creative dialogue and mutual understanding" as a means of growing in brotherhood and forging a shared identity (*Homily in Suva*, 21 November 1986). Precisely this kind of "creativity" – based on a persevering commitment to accepting and appreciating the real differences separating the various elements of Fijian society within the broader context of national unity, constitutional legality and justice under law – must undergird the specific political decisions facing your nation's leaders. Clearly, in the end, the arduous task of building a social order respectful of legitimate diversities within a shared identity and a commitment to the common good cannot be limited to legislative measures alone, for these would prove ineffectual unless they were grounded first and foremost in the consciousness and in the lived ethos of the population (cf. *Message for the 2001 World Day of Peace*, No. 15).

In a rapidly changing global order, I am convinced that multi-cultural and multi-religious societies like Fiji have much to offer to other nations, since they can assist the wider international community in developing new global models of unity within diversity. A sustained commitment to dialogue between different religions, cultures and traditions is in fact "the obligatory path to the building of a reconciled world, a world able to look with serenity to its own future" (*ibid.*, No. 3). Despite daunting challenges and at times heated confrontations, dialogue remains a moral imperative and the only sure means of forging genuine and lasting convergence based on mutual respect and cooperation. Commitment to the path of dialogue is ultimately based on the profound conviction that, beyond our many differences, all of us share an underlying unity born of our being children of God and members of the one human family. All cultures, in their rich variety and distinctive features, are ultimately dynamic, historical expressions of this fundamental unity. As the people of Fiji look to the future, I am confident that they will discover the deepest foundations for their national identity precisely to the extent that they acknowledge and defend those transcendent truths and values which unite all men and women of good will: respect for the dignity of each human being and the protection of fundamental human rights; solidarity between individuals and peoples; and the promotion of justice, without which there can be no authentic freedom or lasting peace.

Allow me to assure you, Mr Ambassador, of the desire of Fiji's Catholic community to contribute to the work of reconciliation and national unity by their practical witness to the Gospel. Through their outreach in the fields of

education and health care, and their service to the poor, the Catholics of Fiji seek to put into practice the evangelical message of love of neighbour and to be a leaven of divine mercy within society. In her preaching and ministry the Church is likewise committed to eliminating the causes of racial, social and religious conflict, promoting a just resolution of the complex legal and ethical issues involving land ownership and use, and fostering a serene and respectful dialogue between the various elements of Fijian society. It is my hope that, together with their brothers and sisters of other Christian denominations, and in a spirit of cooperation with all people of good will, the Catholics of Fiji will continue to serve the common good by serving as peacemakers and builders of solidarity among individuals, families and the greater national community.

Your Excellency, I express to you once more my deep affection for the people of Fiji and my confidence in their capacity to lay the foundations for a harmonious and prosperous society to bequeath to future generations. With prayerful good wishes for the work you now undertake in the service of the nation, I assure you of the constant readiness of the offices of the Holy See to assist you in the fulfilment of your duties. Upon you and your family, and upon all your fellow-citizens, I cordially invoke the divine blessings of wisdom, strength and peace.

S.E. il Signor Emitai Lausiki Boladuadua S.E. il Signor Emitai Lausiki Boladuadua**Ambasciatore delle Isole Fiji presso la Santa Sede**

È nato il 13 aprile 1944.

È sposato ed ha quattro figli.

Laureato in Scienze dell'Educazione (1967, New South Wales, Australia), si è successivamente specializzato in Amministrazione Scolastica (1974, Berkshire, Inghilterra).

Ha ricoperto, tra gli altri, i seguenti incarichi: Assistente (1968-1970), Capo del Dipartimento di Scienze (1970-1972), Vice Direttore (1973-1980) e Direttore (1981-1983) della *Ratu Kadavulevu School*; Direttore del *Labasa College* (1984-1987); Direttore del *Fiji Institute of Technology* (1988-1990); Sotto-Segretario del Ministero per l'Educazione, i Giovani e lo Sport (1990-1993); Sotto-Segretario del Ministero per gli Affari Esteri e l'Aviazione Civile (1993-1996); Segretario Permanente dei seguenti Dicasteri: Informazione e Telecomunicazioni (1997), Affari Interni ed Immigrazione (1997-1999) Educazione e Tecnologia (1999), Affari Esteri (1999-2000); Consulente del Ministero degli Esteri (2002).

Dal 2002 è Alto Commissario a Londra, ove risiede.

Ha rappresentato il suo Paese in numerose Conferenze ed Incontri internazionali.

[00758-02.02] [Original text: English]

• DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DEL BURUNDI PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. IL SIGNOR TÉRENCE NSANZE

Monsieur l'Ambassadeur,

1. Soyez le bienvenu au Vatican, où j'ai le plaisir d'accueillir Votre Excellence, à l'occasion de la présentation des Lettres qui L'accréditent comme Ambassadeur extraordinaire et plénipotentiaire du Burundi près le Saint-Siège.

Je vous remercie des paroles courtoises que vous m'avez adressées. Votre accréditation auprès du Saint-Siège s'effectue au moment même où votre pays, en application des Accords d'Arusha, connaît une nouvelle étape de son chemin vers la réconciliation et l'établissement de la paix. À ceux qui ont en charge les destinées de la nation, ainsi qu'à tous ses habitants, je vous saurais gré de transmettre les vœux fervents que je forme pour les Autorités et pour l'ensemble des Burundais, afin que, à tous les niveaux de la société, ils manifestent toujours plus clairement leur engagement effectif dans le processus en cours. Puissent tous les habitants du pays œuvrer courageusement pour parvenir à une paix durable, fondée sur la justice et le pardon, afin de pouvoir

vivre en sécurité sur leur terre, patrimoine commun de tous les Burundais, dans lequel tous sont appelés à se reconnaître comme frères !

2. Vous venez de souligner, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, que la nécessité de parvenir à un cessez-le-feu définitif et permanent est un préalable nécessaire à la paix dans votre pays. La haine et la violence ont causé trop de souffrances et nourrissent encore trop de rancœurs. Les accords conclus entre le gouvernement et la plupart des groupes armés témoignent des progrès qui peuvent être réalisés lorsque sont empruntés les chemins d'un dialogue constructif et de la concertation. Ils ont aussi redonné confiance à la Communauté internationale, qui a commencé à soutenir activement le processus en cours, et ils ont suscité une grande espérance parmi le peuple burundais, meurtri par des années de conflit. Il importe donc aujourd'hui de ne pas décevoir cette espérance mais de la renforcer. Pour cela, il revient d'abord aux responsables politiques de montrer leur désir sincère de faire respecter cet accord de cessez-le-feu et de le mettre en application. Cette tâche ne peut se réaliser sans une juste conception de l'exercice du pouvoir, caractérisée en particulier par le service désintéressé de la communauté nationale et du bien commun, par la probité dans les responsabilités confiées, par le souci de protéger la population civile et de faire respecter ses droits, et aussi d'intéresser tous les Burundais à la cause de la nation. Ces valeurs, qui passent avant tout programme politique, constituent une exigence éthique qui est le mieux à même d'assurer la paix intérieure des nations et la paix entre les États, les mettant à l'abri des luttes ethniques, et de l'arbitraire et de la corruption, comme je l'ai appelé au Corps diplomatique près le Saint-Siège le 13 janvier dernier (cf. n. 5).

3. La consolidation de l'unité nationale nécessite que toutes les composantes de la nation soient associées au processus en cours visant la création d'institutions stables, capables avant toute chose de promouvoir et de garantir la concorde sociale. Pour cela, l'exigence de dialogue avec tous les groupes en présence doit se poursuivre, afin de ne pas entrer dans une logique de l'exclusion, qui exacerbe les antagonismes et qui engendre la violence. Dans cette perspective, il semble aussi nécessaire de mettre en œuvre les mesures adéquates, conformément aux accords, pour que tous les habitants du pays, quelle que soit leur appartenance politique, ethnique ou religieuse, bénéficient de la subsistance nécessaire, ce qui conduira chacun à respecter le bien d'autrui, notamment des populations civile.

4. Vous rappelez, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, le patrimoine de valeurs humaines qui atteste des ressources culturelles et spirituelles dont dispose votre pays. Ces valeurs constituent un héritage précieux grâce auquel le Burundi, en tirant de manière constructive les leçons du passé, peut travailler à engager une nouvelle manière de vivre ensemble, dans une société toujours plus réconciliée et plus solidaire, attentive à tracer le sillon d'un avenir de paix et d'espérance pour les nouvelles générations. L'Église catholique est présente au Burundi depuis 1898. Elle continue aujourd'hui à se dépenser sans relâche pour éclairer les cœurs et les consciences sur la nécessité de travailler à la paix et à la réconciliation, et pour mettre toute la richesse de son expérience au service du développement intégral des personnes et de la société entière. Par sa présence dans les domaines de l'éducation, de la santé, de l'action sociale et caritative, elle souhaite contribuer à l'édification de la société burundaise, en permettant à tous les fils du pays de participer au progrès humain et spirituel de tous, et en les rendant toujours plus acteurs de leur propre développement. Elle sait d'expérience que le développement d'un pays passe par une formation sans cesse approfondie et par une éducation humaine, morale et spirituelle.

5. Vous me permettez, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, de saluer chaleureusement par votre intermédiaire la communauté catholique burundaise et ses Évêques. Je les invite tous à ne jamais se décourager devant l'immensité de la tâche à accomplir. En ce temps pascal, ils savent que sur la croix du Christ ont été clouées toutes les œuvres de la mort que sont la peur de l'autre, l'égoïsme, la violence et la haine. Je les encourage à demeurer des sentinelles de l'espérance et des acteurs de la réconciliation, attentifs à porter l'Évangile de la Vie partout où sont ébranlés les « piliers de la paix » que sont la vérité, la justice, l'amour et la liberté (cf. *Message pour la célébration de la Journée mondiale de la Paix 2003*, n. 4).

6. Alors que vous inaugurez votre mission auprès du Siège apostolique, je vous offre mes meilleurs vœux pour son heureux accomplissement. Soyez assuré que vous trouverez ici, auprès de mes collaborateurs, l'accueil attentif et compréhensif dont vous pourrez avoir besoin.

Sur Votre Excellence, sur les personnes qui L'entourent, sur le peuple du Burundi et sur ceux qui président à ses destinées, j'invoque de grand cœur l'abondance des Bénédiction divines.

S.E. il Signor Térence Nsanze S.E. il Signor Térence NsanzeAmbasciatore del Burundi presso la Santa Sede

È nato il 2 febbraio 1937.

È coniugato ed ha quattro figli.

Diplomato in Filosofia (Seminario Maggiore di Burasira), ha frequentato successivamente l'Accademia Diplomatica della Georgetown University (1961-1964, Washington). Ha conseguito un Master in Scienze Politiche (1968, New York) e un Dottorato in Diritto Pubblico Internazionale (1987, Ginevra).

Ha ricoperto, tra gli altri, i seguenti incarichi: Primo Consigliere (1964-1965) e Rappresentante Permanente (1965-1966) presso l'O.N.U., New York; Ambasciatore negli Stati Uniti d'America (1967-1973); Direttore Generale del Dipartimento Stampa e Informazione della Presidenza della Repubblica (1973-1974); Ambasciatore in Francia e Rappresentante Permanente presso l'U.N.E.S.C.O. e l'Ufficio O.N.U. di Ginevra (1975-1976); Ambasciatore a Berna (1978-1986), e contemporaneamente accreditato a Vienna e Roma; Ambasciatore a disposizione del Ministero degli Esteri (1987-1995).

Nel 1993 ha fondato il Partito politico "Alliance Burundo-Africaine"; Ambasciatore presso l'O.N.U. a New York e Ginevra (1995-1998).

In qualità di firmatario dell'accordo per la Pace e la Riconciliazione Nazionale, fa parte di varie Istituzioni transitorie del Burundi. Dall'agosto 2002, inoltre, negoziatore, a nome del Governo, per "il cessate il fuoco" tra i diversi gruppi armati burundesi.

Attualmente è Ambasciatore a Berlino, ove risiede.

Parla le seguenti lingue: francese, inglese, spagnolo, arabo, russo, swahili, tedesco, italiano e olandese. Conosce il latino e il greco.

[00759-03.02] [Texte original: Français]

• DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DI GEORGIA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. IL SIGNOR ALEXANDER CHIKVAIDZE

Your Excellency,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the Vatican at the beginning of your mission as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Georgia to the Holy See. My visit to your country in 1999 was a particular joy for me. I fondly recall the warmth with which I was received and the fervent ecumenical spirit in which I was able to share. I would ask you kindly to convey to His Excellency President Shevardnadze, and to the Government and people of your noble land, my gratitude for their good wishes, which I reciprocate, and to assure them of my prayers for the nation's peace and well-being.

The ideals of peace, freedom and justice to which you poignantly refer are essential and interdependent components of genuine progress in any nation. Authentic development must not however become detached from its intrinsic connection with human rights (cf. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 33). As the people of Georgia know only too well, when these rights – rooted in the very nature of the human person – are denied, not only is the economic growth of a nation thwarted but the culture itself is undermined and the spirit of the people stifled. Nevertheless, in spite of the various forms of oppression that Georgia has suffered, the identity and unity of the nation have survived and today are flourishing anew.

As Georgia continues to engage in the delicate task of shaping its national spirit, it should constantly be borne in mind that human development cannot be reduced solely to economic elements. The "mere accumulation of goods and services, even for the benefit of the majority, is not enough for the realization of human happiness" (cf. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 28). Indeed, the experience of history shows that no matter what the dominant political ideology may be, unless the laws and institutions of civic life are guided by an orientation towards the true good of the human person, hallmarks of so-called economic liberation can in fact mask injustices of increasing poverty and social fragmentation. In the face of such inequalities, usually caused by the exclusion of the weakest members of society from access to resources and services intended for all, we are reminded that the gifts we receive from God are given in order that we may make them more fruitful (cf. *Mt* 25:26-28). Thus it is in accordance with the will of God the Creator that we must commit ourselves to working together for the full development of others: development of the whole human being and of all people (cf. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 30).

Christianity has made profound contributions to Georgia in the past. It must do likewise in the present and future. Since the preaching of Saint Nino in the early fourth century, Christianity has found expression in Georgian culture and has safeguarded the nation's identity which has been so often threatened. For this reason I said during my visit to your country that faith in Jesus Christ is Georgia's "true anchor" (*Arrival Speech*, Tbilisi, 8 November 1999). This faith, which has held together the nation's resolute aspirations to unity, has been recorded and celebrated in numerous ways through Georgia's great spiritual heritage. Most importantly, this heritage has steadfastly preserved the great treasure of a unified and comprehensive notion of the human person and his destiny. With such resources Georgia can make an important contribution to the stability of the region. Situated at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, it is in a unique position to inspire a new culture of the spirit witnessing to a civilization of love sustained by the message of the Gospel.

The cooperation and example of the Christian Churches is crucial to the attainment of national unity necessary for Georgia to take its rightful place in the new Europe. Faithful to the will of the Lord who desired all his disciples to be one (cf. *Jn* 17:21), Georgian Christians must tirelessly strive to be united in common witness to him and his Gospel. This demands that the ecumenical dialogue between Churches, the theological progress of which cannot be underestimated, must be further enhanced by practical gestures of generosity and justice, especially in regard to the right of freedom of conscience expressed most sublimely in freedom of worship. It is fidelity to truth and charity which renders anomalous, indeed even contradictory, any obstacles placed in the path of genuine religious worship and the preservation of cultural patrimony associated with it. In this regard, I am confident that the recent statement of President Shevardnadze about religious intolerance echoes the thoughts of all men and women of goodwill.

Mr Ambassador, I thank you for your gracious words of appreciation for what the Catholic Church is doing for the people of Georgia through her humanitarian organizations assisting vulnerable groups. The Church's charitable mission of service to all peoples, particularly the poor and suffering, stands at the heart of her witness to Christ's all-encompassing love. It is her ardent desire to extend where possible her "commitment to practical and concrete love for every human being" (*Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 49). Christian charity however is always more than simply humanitarian aid. For the Catholic Church, her acts of charity are inextricably linked to the celebration of the Eucharist from which she draws the spiritual power needed to sustain the life of her people and carry out her mission (cf. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 22). And so, as the small Catholic community in Georgia continues to gather together to worship the Lord, so too her service of unconditional love to all Georgians will prosper, bringing gestures of peace and hope to the most needful of your nation.

Your Excellency, I am confident that the diplomatic mission which you begin today will further strengthen the bonds of understanding and cooperation existing between the Republic of Georgia and the Holy See. I assure you that the various offices of the Roman Curia are willing to assist you in the fulfilment of your duties. With my sincere good wishes, I invoke upon you, your family and all the people of Georgia, the blessings of Almighty God.

S.E. il Signor Alexander D. Chikvaidze S.E. il Signor Alexander D. ChikvaidzeAmbasciatore di Georgia presso la Santa Sede

È nato a Tbilisi il 19 gennaio 1932.

È sposato ed ha due figli.

Si è laureato in Legge (1955, Mosca) ed ha conseguito il Dottorato in Scienze Politiche (1967, Mosca) e in Storia (1976, Tbilisi). Nel 1979 ha frequentato un Corso per *Senior Diplomat* presso l'Accademia Diplomatica dell'URSS.

Ha intrapreso la carriera diplomatica nel 1967 ricoprendo i seguenti incarichi: Vice Console dell'Unione Sovietica in India (1967-1969); Primo Segretario presso l'Ambasciata dell'URSS a Londra (1969-1972); Docente di Affari Internazionali e Diplomazia presso l'Università di Tbilisi (1973-1978); Console Generale dell'Unione Sovietica a San Francisco, U.S.A. (1979-1983); Ambasciatore dell'URSS in Kenya (1983-1985); Vice Capo del Dipartimento Affari Internazionali del Ministero degli Esteri (1985-1989); Ambasciatore dell'URSS, e successivamente della Federazione Russa, nei Paesi Bassi (1989-1992); Primo Vice-Ministro e Ministro degli Affari Esteri di Georgia (1992-1993); Ministro degli Affari Esteri di Georgia (1993-1995);

Ambasciatore di Georgia in Grecia (1995-2002).

Dal 2002 è Ambasciatore in Svizzera e Rappresentante Permanente presso l'Ufficio delle Nazioni Unite ed Istituzioni Specializzate a Ginevra.

Parla inglese, russo e francese.

[00760-02.02] [Original text: English]

• DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DI VANUATU PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. IL SIGNOR MICHEL RITTIÉ

Monsieur l'Ambassadeur,

1. C'est avec plaisir que je souhaite une cordiale bienvenue à Votre Excellence, à l'occasion de la présentation des Lettres qui L'accréditent comme premier Ambassadeur extraordinaire et plénipotentiaire de la République de Vanuatu près le Saint-Siège.

Les paroles que vous venez de m'adresser, et dont je vous remercie vivement, témoignent de l'intérêt porté par les autorités de votre pays au développement de relations d'estime et de respect entre la République de Vanuatu et le Siège apostolique. Par votre intermédiaire, il m'est agréable de présenter à Son Excellence Monsieur John Bennett Bani, Président de la République, les vœux que je forme pour sa personne et pour l'accomplissement de sa haute charge au service de la nation. Je remercie également Son Excellence Monsieur Edward N. Natapei, Premier Ministre, pour les souhaits déférents dont il m'a honoré. Je salue enfin avec affection tout le peuple de Vanuatu.

2. Vous avez rappelé, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, le riche héritage historique de l'archipel de Vanuatu et sa position particulière en Océanie, éléments qui ont modelé la nation pour en faire aujourd'hui une société multiculturelle où des hommes, dans la grande diversité de leurs origines nationales, de leurs langues, de leurs expressions religieuses et des valeurs qui les animent, ont à cœur d'édifier une société fraternelle. Puissent les responsables de votre jeune République s'attacher à ce que cette belle diversité soit toujours plus au service de l'unité nationale et qu'elle s'exprime dans la vie politique et sociale, afin que tous les citoyens puissent exercer leurs droits légitimes et participer aux décisions politiques qui orientent la vie commune ! Le chemin d'un «vivre ensemble» vraiment fécond s'enracine dans le souci patiemment partagé de bâtir une nation où les particularités de chacun servent au bien commun, où la volonté sincère de construire un monde uni s'exprime de manière visible dans les choix et les orientations de la société, et où la volonté de travailler sans relâche à la justice et à l'équité prenne en compte les aspirations de tous les habitants du pays, en priorité des plus démunis. Cela ne peut se réaliser sans un réel effort qui vise au juste respect des personnes et des biens, à l'équitable répartition des richesses et des responsabilités, ainsi qu'au souci permanent de préserver l'environnement et les ressources naturelles. Je ne doute pas que les efforts déjà entrepris par le peuple de Vanuatu et par ses

dirigeants porteront des fruits, en vue de permettre un développement intégral de tous les citoyens et le renforcement de la solidarité entre tous. Ainsi, la République de Vanuatu pourra également participer à la construction et à la consolidation de la concorde dans la région.

3. J'ai apprécié, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, l'ouverture de votre pays aux questions touchant à la vie du monde, et son désir de participer activement à l'action de la Communauté internationale. Cette volonté témoigne d'une maturité politique et humaine, qui perçoit de manière aiguë la vocation d'une nation à devenir partenaire d'une nouvelle stabilité internationale. Au moment où des conflits meurtriers continuent d'engendrer la violence et de fragiliser les équilibres mondiaux, il revient à toutes les nations sans exception de relever le défi de la paix, et de ne négliger aucun effort pour que cette paix soit effective et durable dans le monde. De cet effort, nul ne doit être exclu. Il est en effet essentiel que toutes les nations, quel que soit leur poids sur l'échiquier mondial, soient reconnues comme des acteurs de la croissance et du bonheur de tous, dans le combat permanent mené contre les fléaux qui menacent la survie de l'humanité, la sérénité des personnes et la sécurité des sociétés (cf. *Discours au Corps diplomatique 2003*).

J'invite donc la Communauté internationale à encourager et à mettre en valeur les efforts réalisés par les petites nations pour participer à l'édification de la paix, si essentielle à la croissance humaine et spirituelle du monde. Je souhaite aussi que le développement des relations culturelles et commerciales, que la République de Vanuatu entretient déjà avec d'autres nations ou avec des Organismes internationaux, favorise en retour dans votre pays le progrès économique et la justice sociale, conditions essentielles pour servir le bien-être matériel et spirituel de sa population.

4. Dans un esprit de dialogue et de collaboration fraternelle, à la place qui lui revient et selon sa vocation propre l'Église catholique dans votre pays, à travers l'engagement de ses membres, entend participer activement à ce développement intégral des personnes. En se mettant au service de tous dans de nombreux domaines, comme la santé, l'action sociale et caritative, et en particulier l'éducation, elle entend favoriser le progrès de la justice et de la convivialité.

Soucieuse du respect de la liberté et des convictions de chacun, elle souhaite poursuivre un dialogue serein et respectueux avec toutes les communautés humaines et religieuses qui sont présentes dans l'archipel, et accomplir ainsi la mission qu'elle a reçue du Christ. Refusant toutes les divisions et les oppositions qui mettent en péril la poursuite du bien commun, elle se sait appelée à travailler avec ardeur à l'établissement d'une véritable «civilisation de l'amour».

5. Par votre intermédiaire, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, vous me permettrez de saluer la communauté catholique présente dans votre pays, et en particulier son Pasteur, Monseigneur Michel Visi, évêque de Port-Vila. Puissent pasteurs et fidèles suivre le chemin du Christ, proclamer sa vérité et vivre de sa vie, pour que les peuples du Pacifique, qui luttent pour leur unité et leur identité, soient toujours plus habités par un grand souci de paix, de justice et de respect de la création (cf. Exhortation apostolique *Ecclesia in Oceania*, n. 8) !

6. Au moment où vous inaugurez votre mission auprès du Siège apostolique, je vous offre mes vœux les meilleurs pour son heureux accomplissement. Soyez assuré qu'auprès de mes collaborateurs vous trouverez toujours l'accueil attentif et compréhensif dont vous pourrez avoir besoin.

Sur votre Excellence, sur sa famille, sur tout le peuple de Vanuatu et sur ses dirigeants, j'invoque de grand cœur l'abondance des Bénédictions divines.

S.E. il Signor Michel Rittié S.E. il Signor Michel RittiéAmbasciatore di Vanuatu

È nato il 3 aprile 1950.

È sposato ed ha tre figli.

Diplomato in materie tecniche, ha ottenuto una licenza in Aviazione Civile.

Ha ricoperto, tra gli altri, i seguenti incarichi: Direttore tecnico nell'industria privata (fino al 1992); Consigliere del Primo Ministro di Vanuatu e Consigliere Tecnico presso il Ministero degli Affari Esteri (1992-1999); *Chargé de mission* del Ministero degli Esteri (1999-2000); Consigliere del Ministro degli Affari Esteri (2000-2001).

Dal 2001 è Ambasciatore in Marocco, ove risiede.

S.E. il Sig. Michel Rittié è primo Ambasciatore di Vanuatu presso la Santa Sede.

[00761-03.02] [Texte original: Français]

• DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DELLA REPUBBLICA MOLDOVA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. IL SIGNOR MIHAIL LAUR

Monsieur l'Ambassadeur,

1. C'est avec plaisir que j'accueille Votre Excellence en cette circonstance solennelle de la présentation des Lettres qui l'accréditent comme Ambassadeur extraordinaire et plénipotentiaire de la République de Moldavie près le Saint-Siège.

J'ai été sensible aux paroles que vous m'avez adressées et je vous saurais gré de transmettre mes salutations à Son Excellence Monsieur Vladimir Voronine, Président de la République. Je salue très cordialement le peuple moldave tout entier et je forme des vœux fervents pour que, grâce à ses efforts de solidarité et de concorde entre toutes les composantes de la nation, il trouve les chemins d'un véritable épanouissement humain et spirituel.

2. Je vous remercie pour la présentation de la situation de votre pays, indépendant depuis 1991, qui s'efforce de trouver sa place dans l'Europe et dans le concert des nations.

Après la tragique expérience des deux guerres mondiales au cours du siècle qui vient de s'achever, le millénaire qui commence n'a pu éviter ni le déchaînement du terrorisme ni le recours à la guerre. Comme je l'ai rappelé dans mon *Message pour la Journée mondiale de la paix 2003*, à l'occasion du quarantième anniversaire de *Pacem in terris*, l'encyclique de mon bienheureux prédécesseur le Pape Jean XXIII, la construction de la paix est une œuvre de longue haleine, jamais achevée, qui s'appuie sur «les quatre exigences précises de l'esprit humain : la vérité, la justice, l'amour et la liberté» (n. 3). C'est pourquoi elle doit mobiliser les énergies des responsables politiques des nations, pour lutter contre le terrorisme et sa violence aveugle, pour dénoncer le commerce des armes et la compétition militaire entre les États, mais aussi pour encourager à la réconciliation entre les peuples partout où il y a des foyers de tension. «La négociation honnête, patiente et respectueuse des droits et des aspirations des parties en présence peut ouvrir la voie à une résolution pacifique des situations les plus complexes» (*Message à l'occasion du cinquantième anniversaire de la fin de la seconde guerre mondiale en Europe*, n. 9); elle est toujours préférable à la guerre et à tous les maux qu'elle engendre, comme on le voit trop souvent.

En union avec tous les partenaires de bonne volonté, le Saint-Siège entend apporter sa contribution en faveur de l'unité du Continent européen, pour que les peuples qui le composent se développent harmonieusement, dans la coopération et le respect mutuels, et qu'ils soient ouverts aux échanges avec les autres nations du monde, afin de faire bénéficier chacun des fruits de la paix et du développement.

3. Vous avez souligné, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, l'attachement de votre nation aux valeurs européennes ainsi qu'à ses racines chrétiennes, et vous avez exprimé votre gratitude à l'Église catholique pour le soutien qu'elle apporte à la consolidation de la paix, en particulier pour son aide en vue de la résolution pacifique des conflits et pour son action en faveur des droits humains. Je suis sensible à cette attention.

L'Église fonde son engagement en faveur de l'homme et de sa dignité sur la Révélation dont elle est dépositaire : la tradition biblique enseigne en effet que l'homme est créé à l'image de Dieu, animé du souffle divin et

capable, malgré la blessure du péché, d'agir librement en vue du bien (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 17). C'est à la lumière de cette conviction de foi, et aussi avec la sagesse de l'expérience qui vient des leçons de l'histoire, que l'Église a appris à considérer la vie humaine «comme la réalité la plus sacrée et la plus intangible qui est présente sur la scène du monde» (*Message pour la Journée mondiale de la Paix, 1er janvier 2001*, n. 19). Notre devoir est de la défendre et de la respecter. Aussi, au début de ce nouveau millénaire, l'Église catholique entend-elle encourager les hommes à construire une civilisation de l'amour, qui privilégie les valeurs de la rencontre entre les personnes et entre les cultures, ainsi que le dialogue entre les protagonistes de la société civile.

Pour édifier une société vraiment humaine, qui honore la dignité de chacun et qui permet un authentique dialogue entre toutes ses composantes, il est nécessaire de donner une formation aux citoyens, en particulier aux jeunes. C'est l'éducation qui leur permettra d'acquérir un véritable humanisme, ouvert à la dimension éthique et religieuse, à une juste conception de la démocratie et des droits humains, à la connaissance et à l'estime des cultures et des valeurs spirituelles des diverses civilisations. Je forme le vœu que les responsables des nations et les personnes qui participent à cette noble mission éducative soient pénétrés d'un esprit de service de l'homme.

4. Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, en cette circonstance solennelle, je suis heureux de saluer à travers votre personne les membres de la communauté catholique de Moldavie. Unie autour de son Évêque et des prêtres qui sont à son service, elle montre un vrai dynamisme et je sais qu'elle entretient des relations fraternelles avec les membres des autres Églises et communautés ecclésiales. Qu'elle garde vif le désir de l'unité entre les chrétiens et qu'elle y contribue par ses initiatives ! La communauté catholique entretient également de bonnes relations avec les Autorités civiles et je m'en réjouis; je souhaite que, par leur participation active à la vie du pays et par leur solidarité avec les plus pauvres, les catholiques éprouvent toujours davantage la joie de servir et de partager, coopérant ainsi au développement humain et spirituel de leur pays.

5. Au moment où vous inaugurez votre mission auprès du Saint-Siège, je vous offre mes vœux fervents pour l'accomplissement de votre mission. Je tiens à vous assurer du soutien cordial et attentif que vous trouverez toujours ici, auprès de mes collaborateurs.

Sur votre Excellence et sur sa famille, ainsi que sur le peuple moldave et sur ses dirigeants, j'invoque de grand cœur l'abondance des Bénédiction divines.

S.E. il Signor Mihail Laur S.E. il Signor Mihail LaurAmbasciatore della Repubblica Moldova presso la Santa Sede

È nato il 18 novembre 1942.

È sposato ed ha tre figli.

Ha conseguito una Laurea (1975, Omsk), ed un Dottorato di ricerca in Storia (1979, Mosca).

Ha inoltre ottenuto una specializzazione presso l'Istituto Europeo di Studi Pubblici e Amministrativi (1996, Maastricht).

Ha ricoperto i seguenti incarichi: Assistente e successivamente Professore presso il Dipartimento di Storia dell'Università di Omsk (Federazione Russa, 1975-1987); Capo del Dipartimento di Storia e Politologia (1987-1992) e Decano del Dipartimento di Filologia presso l'Università moldava di Tiraspol (1992-1995); Rappresentante del Parlamento moldavo alle Riunioni Parlamentari della Comunità degli Stati Indipendenti (CIS) e Vice Segretario Generale del Consiglio dell'Assemblea Interparlamentare CIS (1995-2001).

Dal 2001 è Ambasciatore della Repubblica di Moldova in Ungheria, ove risiede.

Parla rumeno, russo e francese.

S.E. il Sig. Mihail Laur è il primo Ambasciatore della Repubblica di Moldova presso la Santa Sede.

[00762-03.02[Texte original: Français]

• DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DEL PAKISTAN PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. LA SIGNORA FAUZIA ABBAS

Your Excellency,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Vatican as you present the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to the Holy See. I appreciate the cordial greetings which you have expressed on behalf of the President, the Government and people of Pakistan. It is my great hope that the friendship which already exists between your country and the Holy See will deepen and be marked by further signs of mutual trust and respect. Please convey to President Musharraf and the citizens of your nation the assurance of my prayers for the country's peace and well-being.

I am grateful for your observations made in recognition of the untiring efforts of the Church to promote peace and the alleviation of conflict in our troubled world. The Holy See certainly shares Pakistan's desire to build solid foundations for peace on enduring moral principles which find their source in the fundamental God-given dignity of the human person. Indeed the Holy See's activity in the international forum stems from this specific vision of the human person, and from the conviction that when it is undermined or abandoned the very foundation of human society is shaken. It is a perspective which calls for the advancement of freedom attained through the guarantee of fundamental human rights. Not least of these rights are: unprejudiced access to the employment market, full participation in democratic civic life, and freedom of authentic religious practice. Each confirms the equality of all citizens.

The recent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have given Pakistan unprecedented attention in the international media. Against the backdrop of these human tragedies there has arisen an opportunity – indeed a duty – for your nation to contribute greatly to the peace for which the human family longs. Your Government's recent efforts to root out the evil perpetuated by fundamentalist groups bent on terrorism have been rightly welcomed across the globe. Similarly, Pakistan's current courageous gestures and proposals which are breathing new life into the dialogue for peace with India have brought renewed hope for rapprochement and for a reduction in the vast sums spent on maintaining a high level military presence in the Kashmir region. Such initiatives bring a sense of relief not only to your own peoples but also to the international community as a whole. These measures are viewed as positive steps towards the building of a civilization of love in which all peoples can be secure and live in peace.

In addition to a nation's responsible and willing participation in the accords and agreements intended to promote improved international relations, authentic development also requires adherence to a plan of genuine national progress. Such a programme will always respect the rights and legitimate aspirations of the people, including those of minority groups. It also demands transparent government and an impartial judiciary system. Without these foundations of civilized society the hope for progress, to which every human being aspires, remains elusive. For this reason I have said on numerous occasions that corruption, whether it be on the part of politicians, judiciary officials or administrators and bureaucrats (cf. *Ecclesia in Asia*, 8), is a scourge which affronts the inviolable dignity of every human person and which paralyzes a nation's social, economic and cultural advancement.

Your Excellency, I am pleased to acknowledge the considerable political reforms which have recently been implemented in Pakistan for the improvement of civic life. The abolition of the separate electorates system and the preservation of the reserved seats allocation has done much to restore the faith of all Pakistanis – not just those of the ethnic and religious minorities – in the Provincial and National electoral processes. This move has been publicly lauded by, among others, the Catholic Bishops of your country. Nevertheless it must also be noted that the grievances which continue to be felt particularly among the Christian minority in your country detract from the overall well-being of the nation. The grave difficulties that the Blasphemy Laws cause and the incidents of violence and vandalism against Christians and their properties have been well documented. But there are also the lingering questions of inequality of access to jobs in the workplace and unequal treatment of minority groups

in public institutions, whether they be pupils in schools or persons before the law courts. The constitutional guarantee of civil and religious rights must be reflected in the employment and service policies of government departments and become an example for other sectors of public life to emulate. Without the concrete enactment of recognized fundamental human rights the growth of any society will remain stifled.

The Catholic Church, in service of the human family, is prepared to reach out to all members of Pakistani society without distinction, striving to build with them a civilization of love founded upon the values common to all peoples of peace, justice, solidarity and freedom. With greater participation of missionaries in the life of the Church, her schools and health-care facilities could contribute more extensively to the country's human development programmes. I am confident that you can rely upon the Church to continue to work for the genuine progress of Pakistani society, especially through her assistance of the poor and the relief of suffering.

Your Excellency, you begin your mission at a time in history when the international community is looking to Pakistan with great expectations and high hopes of progress towards peaceful development in both the national and international spheres. I assure you of the Holy See's support for all that promotes the common good of humanity. The various departments of the Roman Curia are ready to assist you in carrying out your duties and I am sure that your service will strengthen the bonds of understanding and cooperation between Pakistan and the Holy See. Upon you, your family and your fellow citizens I cordially invoke the abundant blessings of Almighty God.

S.E. la Signora Fauzia Abbas S.E. la Signora Fauzia AbbasAmbasciatore del Pakistan presso la Santa Sede

È nata il 20 giugno 1951.

È sposata.

Ha conseguito lauree in materie letterarie presso le Università di Punjab e di Canberra.

Ha intrapreso la carriera diplomatica nel 1977 ricoprendo i seguenti incarichi: Funzionario (1977-1979), Capo Sezione (1981-1986) e Direttore (1986-1987) presso il Ministero degli Affari Esteri (1981-1986); Assegnata alle Rappresentanze del Pakistan presso le Nazioni Unite prima a New York (1987-1992) e successivamente a Ginevra (1992-1994); Direttore (1997) e Direttore Generale presso il Ministero degli Esteri (1998-1999); Direttore Generale dell'Ufficio del Ministro degli Affari Esteri (1999-2002).

Dal 2002 è Ambasciatore in Svizzera, ove risiede.

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