

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE



BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIEGE
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLIS

BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 0284

Venerdì 18.05.2001

Pubblicazione: Immediata

Sommario:

- ◆ LE LETTERE CREDENZIALI DEGLI AMBASCIATORI DI: NEPAL, TUNISIA, ESTONIA, ZAMBIA, GUINEA, SRI LANKA, MONGOLIA, REPUBBLICA DEL SUD AFRICA, GAMBIA
- ◆ DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE A 9 AMBASCIATORI IN OCCASIONE DELLA PRESENTAZIONE COLLETTIVA DELLE LETTERE CREDENZIALI

- ◆ LE LETTERE CREDENZIALI DEGLI AMBASCIATORI DI: NEPAL, TUNISIA, ESTONIA, ZAMBIA, GUINEA, SRI LANKA, MONGOLIA, REPUBBLICA DEL SUD AFRICA, GAMBIA

LE LETTERE CREDENZIALI DEGLI AMBASCIATORI DI: NEPAL, TUNISIA, ESTONIA, ZAMBIA, GUINEA, SRI LANKA, MONGOLIA, REPUBBLICA DEL SUD AFRICA, GAMBIA

- DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DEL REGNO DEL NEPAL PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE
- DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DI TUNISIA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE
- DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DELL'ESTONIA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE
- DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DI ZAMBIA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE
- DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DI GUINEA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE
- DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DELLO SRI LANKA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE

- DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DELLA MONGOLIA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE
- DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DELLA REPUBBLICA DEL SUD AFRICA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE
- DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DEL GAMBIA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE

Questa mattina alle ore 11, nella Sala Clementina, il Santo Padre Giovanni Paolo II ha ricevuto in udienza, in occasione della presentazione delle Lettere Credenziali, le Loro Eccellenze i Signori Ambasciatori di: Nepal, Tunisia, Estonia, Zambia, Guinea, Sri Lanka, Mongolia, Sud Africa, Gambia.

Pubblichiamo di seguito i discorsi consegnati dal Papa agli Ambasciatori presso la Santa Sede degli Stati sopra enunciati, nonché i cenni biografici di ciascuno dei nove Ambasciatori:

• **DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DEL REGNO DEL NEPAL PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE**

Mr Ambassador,

It gives me great pleasure to accept the Letters of Credence by which His Majesty King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev has appointed you Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of Nepal to the Holy See. I am grateful to His Majesty for the greetings which you have conveyed in his name, and I reciprocate with good wishes and the assurance of my prayers for the peace of your country and the well-being of your fellow-citizens.

Your Excellency has referred to the Holy See's efforts in the field of international relations to build a world based on the culture of peace, fraternity and religious values. The Holy See's activities in this area are motivated by the particular nature of its religious and humanitarian mission, which underlies its concern for the integral good of every human being. The new Millennium is an invitation to peoples everywhere to look to the future with hope and to cooperate in building a world in which all the members of the human race can occupy their rightful place and live in peace and harmony.

The challenges facing the international community in this regard are immense. Unspeakable suffering has been caused by the tragic sequence of wars, conflicts and instances of genocide which have affected various parts of the world, even in the recent past. Yet these tragedies should not discourage people from working to overcome the factors which produce them: the desire to dominate and exploit others, ideologies of power, exaggerated nationalism and ethnic hatreds. The cause of peace, today as always, should be at the very heart of our efforts to improve the lot of humanity and guarantee a better future for the coming generations.

Peace is possible, but only "to the extent that humanity as a whole rediscovers its fundamental calling to be one family, a family in which the dignity and rights of individuals – whatever their status, race or religion – are accepted as prior and superior to any kind of difference or distinction" (*Message for the Celebration of World Day of Peace 2000*, No. 1). A shared conviction that humanity is a single family should lead to a greater acceptance of legitimate political and cultural differences, and produce a united will to work for respect and reconciliation between groups wherever relations have been marred by hostility and conflict. It is not merely the absence of war which ensures true peace; peace calls for fairness, truth, justice and solidarity. A greater sense of fraternity among the world's peoples, which finds concrete expression in gestures of solidarity and commitment to authentic human development, is necessary in order to overcome excessive economic and social inequalities and the corrosive effects of distrust and pride.

Fortunately, the conviction is being ever more widely accepted that an essential condition for peace is respect for the dignity of the human person and for human rights. Only when the unique value and the rights of the person are recognized, safeguarded and promoted is the social fabric truly strengthened, the priorities of individuals and nations properly ordered, and the quality of international relations improved. Human rights are inscribed in the very nature of the person and reflect the objective and inviolable demands of a universal moral

law. They are not conferred by society or the State. They precede laws and agreements, while determining their value and correctness. The future of the human family requires a common acceptance of the universality and objectivity of human dignity and rights, if the world's peoples are to have the possibility of engaging in meaningful dialogue for the genuine good of all. From this there follows the duty incumbent on the State to defend the moral and spiritual dimensions of life, without which human beings can neither reach fulfilment nor build a society which respects their transcendent nature.

Recognition of the spiritual and transcendent dimension of human life and of the right to religious freedom is at the very heart of the structure of human rights. Due attention to that aspect leads to greater awareness of the inalienable worth of the human person, greater openness to others, a more just and humane society, and a wiser and more responsible use of resources for the common good. Your own country, with its ancient spiritual traditions and religious patrimony, is blessed with a wisdom capable of offering insights and inspiration for a balanced development, respectful of the common good of all its citizens.

In this regard, the Catholic community in Nepal, though small in numbers, is happy to play its part, through its spiritual mission and its work in the areas of education, health care and social assistance. Its members seek no special privileges, but only the guaranteed freedom to follow the dictates of conscience and freedom to practise their religion openly and peacefully in a spirit of respect for the followers of other spiritual traditions.

Mr Ambassador, I am confident that during the term of your mission the friendship and understanding which have characterized relations between the Kingdom of Nepal and the Holy See will continue to grow, and I assure you of the full cooperation of the various offices of the Roman Curia. Upon yourself and your country I invoke abundant divine blessings.

S.E. il Signor Balram Singh Malla
Ambasciatore del Regno del Nepal

È nato l'8 novembre 1942 a Maisthan, Birganj (Nepal).

È sposato ed ha quattro figli.

È laureato in Scienze Politiche e diplomato in Giurisprudenza.

Ha ricoperto i seguenti incarichi: Giudice di Zona; Avvocato del Governo Regionale di Dankuta; Direttore del *Training Center* dell'Amministrazione Giudiziaria nazionale; Segretario del Ministero della Giustizia; Segretario del Ministero del Turismo e dell'Aviazione Civile; Segretario Generale del Governo del Nepal (1996-1999).

Dal 1999 è Ambasciatore anche in Germania.

[00801-02.01] [Original text: English]

• DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DI TUNISIA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE

Madame l'Ambassadeur,

1. Je suis heureux d'accueillir Votre Excellence au Vatican à l'occasion de la présentation des Lettres qui L'accréditent comme Ambassadeur extraordinaire et plénipotentiaire de la République Tunisienne près le Saint-Siège.

Je vous remercie des paroles courtoises que vous m'avez adressées et je vous saurais gré de transmettre à Son Excellence Monsieur Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, Président de la République, mes vœux cordiaux pour sa personne et pour ses compatriotes. Dans le souvenir de l'accueil chaleureux qui m'a été réservé lors de ma visite à Tunis, je demande au Très-Haut d'accorder à tous les Tunisiens de poursuivre avec courage leurs efforts en vue de l'édification d'une nation solidaire et fraternelle où chacun puisse trouver une réponse

convenable à ses justes aspirations et vivre dans la justice et dans la paix.

2. Dans votre discours, vous avez souligné l'attachement de la Tunisie à la liberté de conscience et au libre exercice de tous les cultes. La généreuse tradition d'hospitalité du peuple tunisien et le respect dont il sait témoigner à ses hôtes sont en effet bien connus et font honneur à toute la nation. Je me réjouis vivement de la part que prend votre pays, depuis de nombreuses années, dans l'instauration d'un dialogue sincère entre les cultures et entre les religions. Cet engagement est une contribution importante à l'établissement de relations toujours plus solidaires entre les communautés humaines et religieuses. En effet, ainsi que je l'ai écrit dans mon *Message pour la Journée mondiale de la paix du 1er janvier 2001*, "le dialogue porte à reconnaître la richesse de la diversité et dispose les âmes à l'acceptation réciproque, dans la perspective d'une collaboration authentique, répondant à la vocation originelle à l'unité de la famille humaine tout entière" (n. 10). Pour qu'un tel dialogue puisse se poursuivre et se développer dans la vérité, il est indispensable que les États assurent à tous les citoyens et à toutes les personnes qui vivent sur leurs territoires une pleine liberté religieuse, respectant ainsi la conscience de chaque personne, qui doit pouvoir se déterminer librement et de manière responsable en matière religieuse, étant sauf ce qui relève du bien commun.

3. Comme vous le savez, le respect de la dignité de la personne, dans tous les domaines de l'existence, est pour l'Église catholique un principe essentiel qui doit guider tous les responsables de la vie publique. Par ailleurs, l'expérience montre aussi que l'ignorance de la valeur transcendante et des droits fondamentaux de la personne humaine ne peut que conduire à la violence et à l'instabilité.

Pour qu'il puisse être une composante constitutive et constante de la vie sociale, le respect de la personne doit être inculqué dès le plus jeune âge, à travers l'éducation à laquelle tous, garçons et filles, doivent pouvoir également accéder. Je me réjouis de savoir qu'en Tunisie, un effort important est accompli pour permettre l'accession de tous les jeunes à la connaissance. Il est nécessaire en effet que chacun puisse être aidé à parvenir au plein épanouissement de ses capacités humaines et spirituelles personnelles. Toutefois, l'éducation doit aussi permettre d'ouvrir les esprits à la solidarité et au respect mutuel entre les personnes et entre les communautés humaines et religieuses, car la promotion du bien de l'individu doit être associée au service du bien commun. Ainsi pourra se développer une prise de conscience renouvelée de la dignité humaine et du caractère inaliénable des droits fondamentaux de toute personne. Dès lors, c'est dans cette perspective que tout citoyen doit pouvoir exercer pleinement les droits qui découlent de sa dignité humaine et contribuer librement à la vie sociale et politique de la communauté nationale, permettant à chacun de mettre sa compétence au service de la société.

4. L'actualité de ces dernières semaines, notamment en Terre Sainte, montre l'urgence de travailler avec toujours plus d'audace à la promotion du droit des peuples à vivre en paix et dans la sécurité. Je voudrais redire, une fois encore, que la violence ne peut pas résoudre les problèmes de coexistence entre les peuples; elle ne peut que rendre encore plus difficile leur résolution. Seule la recherche de la justice, dans la confiance mutuelle et en conformité avec les lois internationales, peut contribuer à conduire l'humanité sur les chemins d'une paix véritable, où les droits de chaque peuple à l'existence et au développement sont respectés. J'encourage les efforts accomplis par votre pays, en harmonie avec la communauté internationale, pour que se réalisent partout dans le monde, et en particulier au Moyen-Orient, de nouvelles avancées vers la paix et la solidarité entre les nations.

5. Par votre intermédiaire, Madame l'Ambassadeur, je voudrais saluer chaleureusement l'Évêque de Tunis et toute la communauté catholique de votre pays. Je connais leur attachement à la Tunisie, leur estime pour sa culture et leur désir de poursuivre un dialogue sincère et fraternel avec les croyants de l'Islam. Au début de ce nouveau millénaire, je saisis cette occasion pour inviter les catholiques à grandir toujours plus dans leur foi, dans une profonde communion entre eux et avec toute l'Église, pour que, par leur témoignage de vie au service de Dieu et de leurs frères, ils soient des artisans audacieux de paix et de fraternité, dans le respect de tous.

6. Alors que vous inaugurez votre mission, je vous offre mes vœux cordiaux pour la noble tâche qui vous attend. Soyez assurée, Madame l'Ambassadeur, que vous trouverez ici, auprès de mes collaborateurs, l'accueil attentif et compréhensif dont vous pourrez avoir besoin.

Sur Votre Excellence, sur sa famille ainsi que sur le peuple et sur les responsables de la Nation tunisienne, j'invoque de grand cœur l'abondance des Bénédiction du Tout-Puissant.

S.E. la Signora Saïda Chtioui
Ambasciatore di Tunisia

È nata il 25 settembre 1947.

È sposata ed ha due figli.

Ha conseguito la Licenza in Letteratura Inglese e possiede Diplomi universitari in Diritto, Economia e Politica Internazionale.

Diplomatico di carriera, ha ricoperto i seguenti incarichi: Segretario di Ambasciata presso il Ministero degli Esteri (1970-1977); Capo della Sezione per la Formazione e il Perfezionamento, Ministero degli Esteri (1977-1981); Direttore Aggiunto del Dipartimento per gli "Affari Politici Americani", Ministero degli Esteri (1981-1984); Capo del Dipartimento per la Formazione e il Perfezionamento, Ministero degli Esteri (1984-1988); Direttore dell'Ufficio tunisino del Turismo a Vienna, con accreditamento anche per Ungheria, Cecoslovacchia, Jugoslavia e Polonia (1988-1993); Direttore del Dipartimento per la Formazione e il Perfezionamento, Ministero degli Esteri (1993-1996); Ambasciatore a Londra (1996-1997); Ambasciatore a Varsavia (1997-1999); Direttore Generale del Dipartimento per l'America e l'Asia, Ministero degli Esteri (1999-2000).

È Ambasciatore anche in Svizzera.

[00802-03.01] [Texte original: Français]

• DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DELL'ESTONIA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE

Mr Ambassador,

I am pleased to welcome you today and to receive the Letters of Credence appointing you Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Estonia to the Holy See. I thank you for your gracious words and for the greetings which you bring from President Lennart Meri, and I ask you to convey to His Excellency, to the Government and to the people of Estonia my good wishes and the assurance of my prayers for the peace and prosperity of the nation.

I have cherished memories of my visit to your land in 1993. In welcoming you today, I would like to return to themes which I addressed in Tallinn and which have become still more pertinent in the meantime. It is clear, as you have said, that both Estonia and Europe as a whole have come to an important point of their history. The future will greatly depend upon the effective construction of a culture of human rights which embraces individuals, families and peoples, since each of these is a vital element in the structure of human well-being and freedom, such that if any one of them is disregarded the whole suffers.

In the first place, the rights of individuals must be recognized and protected, for unless the fundamental rights of every person, from the greatest to the least, from the strongest to the weakest, are accepted as transcendent and inviolable, prosperity will be illusory and the foundations of society unsound. To claim that these rights are transcendent is to say that they have their source in God, in whose image the human person is created, and are not conceded as a privilege by any human authority. Therefore, the function of human authority is to provide whatever protection is needed to ensure that this truth is respected.

Yet individual rights, if left in a vacuum, degenerate into a false culture of freedom set against the common good, and this cannot be the way forward for society. Individual rights must serve the common good, and vice versa. This means that the next step in shaping a culture of human freedom is unconditional respect for the rights of the family.

Very rightly, Mr Ambassador, you have asked how we should educate the young in order to inculcate in them a sense of "life's real and eternal values" and awaken in them "a new understanding of charity". The question is vital, and the answer is not simple. But it is clear that the prime hearth of that education must be the family, which is why I have written that "the future of humanity passes by way of the family" (*Familiaris Consortio*, 86). The task of rebuilding the moral and spiritual fabric of society now appears more complex than it did ten years ago. Economic reconstruction remains important of course, but unless it is accompanied by a rebuilding of the values which ensure sound family life, new forms of materialism will inevitably follow. If Estonia can work effectively for an economic development which goes hand in hand with promotion of the family, then it will grow in the moral stature essential for the well-being of its own citizens and for the building of a better Europe and a better world.

The culture of rights which must ground development embraces not only individuals and families, but also peoples. The health of the international community is evident in the way it respects the rights of less powerful peoples and smaller nations. Throughout your history, the rights of the Estonian people have often been disregarded. Happily, these rights have been reclaimed in more recent times, so that once again Estonia stands in the community of peoples as an independent nation, with a distinctive culture which is an enrichment for all. As you have said, Estonia can now "view the world in broader terms", no longer constrained by the desperate struggle to survive, but looking to give and receive within a community of nations in which the rights of all peoples are recognized and protected.

In speaking to the world of culture in Tallinn on 10 September 1993, I stressed the need for freedom to be linked to solidarity, and national identity to a culture of dialogue. What needs to be recognized is that the true and rightful identity of a people is perfectly compatible with an openness, in which differences are accepted as a source of mutual enrichment, and in which tensions are resolved not through conflict but by negotiation based upon mutual respect and concern for the truth of the issues involved. Given recent developments in your country, which, as you say, has sought "to establish firm and fair democratic structures", there is every reason to hope that the future of Estonia will be bright. That is my prayer for the nation, and I assure you that the Catholic Church in your land, though small in numbers, will continue to help build a future worthy of the noble Estonian people.

Mr Ambassador, I am confident that your commitment to the diplomatic task which you begin today will help to strengthen the bonds of understanding and cooperation between Estonia and the Holy See. I assure you that the various offices of the Roman Curia will be ready to assist you in the fulfilment of your duties. With every good wish for the success of your mission, I invoke the blessings of Almighty God upon you, your family and the people of your beloved land.

S.E. il Signor Indrek Tarand
Ambasciatore dell'Estonia

È nato il 3 febbraio 1964.

Ha conseguito il Dottorato in Storia.

Ha ricoperto, tra gli altri, i seguenti uffici: Deputato al Parlamento estone (1990-1992);

Consigliere del Primo Ministro (1993-1994); Capo della Delegazione estone ai negoziati per i confini marittimi tra Estonia e Lettonia (1994-2000); Capo della Delegazione estone ai negoziati per i confini tra Estonia e Federazione Russa (1997-2000).

È residente a Tallin.

[00803-02.01] [Original text: English]

• DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DI ZAMBIA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE

Mr Ambassador,

As you come to the Vatican to present the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Zambia to the Holy See I am pleased to offer you a cordial welcome. The greetings which you bring from your President, Dr Frederick J. Chiluba, are much appreciated, and I would ask you kindly to convey to him the assurance of my prayers for the well-being and prosperity of the nation.

In response to your remark that no efforts should be spared in the quest for peace, I wish to express my satisfaction at your country's willing involvement in the pursuit of peace, an activity which you undertake not for yourselves alone but also for your neighbours and the international community at large. Zambia's endeavours in this regard are indeed worthy of praise, and a particular word of commendation should be addressed to President Chiluba for his personal role in the continuing negotiations in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where the Lusaka Protocol has laid the foundation for a much hoped-for breakthrough in the peace process. In all of this, your nation's commitment to the cause of peace is an eloquent example of concern and action which are a distinguishing mark of a truly civilized and human society.

It is true, as you have observed, that the active involvement and support of the international community is a necessary component of any peace initiative, if it is to meet with success. In fact, lasting peace — whether at national, regional or global levels — will never be achieved unless world leaders recognize that the interdependence by which all nations are linked demands the renunciation of all forms of economic, military or political coercion and the transformation of suspicion and enmity into cooperation and trust. In other words, what we are talking about here is an authentic solidarity between individuals, peoples and nations.

This concept of solidarity means that no one — especially nations and international organizations — can remain indifferent or inactive in the face of violence and war, torture and terrorism, the arms race and all that compromises peace. Rather it calls upon all who truly seek peace, and in a particular way those who serve in specific institutions, to work together to promote an extensive programme of education aimed at overcoming attitudes of egoism and hostility, bringing about in its stead a true culture of peace and solidarity.

In speaking of your country's commitment to work for the cause of peace, you have also recognized the Holy See's efforts in this same area. Indeed, it is precisely the task of fostering understanding and advancing development and peace among peoples and nations which inspires the Holy See's diplomatic activity. The Church, to be sure, has been entrusted by her Divine Founder with a religious and humanitarian mission, different in nature from that of the political community, but open nonetheless to many forms of cooperation and mutual support. In accordance with this mission, the presence of the Holy See in the international community is directed solely to seeking the good of the human family: working for the cause of peace, for the defence of human dignity and human rights, for the integral development of peoples; in a word, working always and everywhere to promote that solidarity which joins peoples in the bond of brotherhood. This is a task which derives necessarily and perennially from the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and is a responsibility shared by all Christians.

The Catholic Church will always be a willing partner in the continuing task of making this solidarity a reality in the worldwide family of man. She will likewise continue to make a specific contribution to the building up of Zambian society, and I am grateful for Your Excellency's appreciative words about the role played by the Catholic Church in this regard. She considers her apostolate in the education of youth and adults, in the staffing of hospitals and clinics and the provision of health care for the poor, in the offering of programmes of social development and human promotion as essential elements of her religious mission. Of course, she wishes to carry out this work in harmony with others who are active in these same fields. Cooperation between Church and State and among all citizens regardless of religious confession is of great importance in advancing people's intellectual and moral education. Thus they will be enabled to build a truly just and humane society, one that will eventually extend beyond national boundaries to embrace all peoples.

Mr Ambassador, I am confident that your mission will serve to strengthen the ties of friendship and cooperation already existing between Zambia and the Holy See. As you take up your new responsibilities I offer you my

prayerful good wishes in the fulfilment of your duties. Upon yourself and the beloved people of Zambia I cordially invoke the abundant blessings of Almighty God.

S.E. il Signor Silumelume Kufunduka Mubukwanu
Ambasciatore di Zambia

È nato il 12 dicembre 1938.

È coniugato ed ha sette figli.

Ha conseguito il Diploma in Trasporti Ferroviari (Zimbabwe), il Diploma in Pubblica Amministrazione (Irlanda) ed il *Local Government Administration Certificate* (Gran Bretagna).

Dal 1960 al 1983 ha ricoperto incarichi nelle Amministrazioni locali del suo Paese.

Ha svolto il ruolo di funzionario presso vari Ministeri dello Zambia fino al 1988.

È quindi passato all'attività produttivo-commerciale, con mansioni direttive.

Nel 1992 è stato nominato Alto Commissario dello Zambia in Nigeria.

Ha ricoperto lo stesso incarico in India dal 1995.

Attualmente è Alto Commissario a Londra.

È inoltre membro fondatore del *Movement for Multiparty Democracy* (MDD).

[00804-02.01] [Original text: English]

• DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DI GUINEA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE

Monsieur l'Ambassadeur,

1. C'est avec plaisir que j'accueille Votre Excellence à l'occasion de la présentation des Lettres qui L'accréditent comme Ambassadeur extraordinaire et plénipotentiaire de la République de Guinée près le Saint-Siège.

J'ai été sensible à vos aimables paroles qui manifestent l'attachement de votre pays aux valeurs spirituelles. Vous voudrez bien transmettre à Son Excellence le Général Lansana Conté, Président de la République, mes vœux cordiaux pour l'accomplissement de sa haute charge au service de la Nation. Je salue chaleureusement le peuple guinéen tout entier, demandant à Dieu de le guider et de le soutenir dans ses efforts pour progresser sur les chemins du développement humain et spirituel. Que le Très-Haut donne à tous de vivre dans la paix et dans la tranquillité !

2. Comme vous l'avez rappelé, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, depuis plusieurs mois votre pays est confronté à de graves problèmes sécuritaires à certaines de ses frontières et il doit accueillir généreusement de nombreux réfugiés fuyant les violences qui se déroulent dans les pays voisins. Devant tant de souffrances, il est urgent que dans la région une paix authentique s'établisse rapidement, afin que les populations puissent enfin retrouver leurs terres et y vivre dans la sécurité. Pour cela, il est nécessaire que se développe partout la conscience que l'humanité est appelée par Dieu à former une unique famille. L'établissement de relations harmonieuses entre les personnes et entre les groupes humains à l'intérieur de chaque nation, comme entre toutes les nations, doit être une priorité notamment pour tous ceux qui ont mission de gouverner les peuples et de les maintenir dans la concorde. Je souhaite vivement qu'en Afrique, continent meurtri par tant de violences, tous s'engagent courageusement et avec audace à mettre en place les conditions d'une véritable réconciliation, afin que cessent définitivement toutes les guerres fratricides.

3. Toutefois, comme j'ai déjà eu l'occasion de le rappeler, "il n'y a pas de paix véritable si elle ne s'accompagne pas d'équité, de vérité, de justice et de solidarité. Est voué à l'échec tout projet qui tend à séparer deux droits indivisibles et interdépendants : le droit à la paix et le droit à un développement intégral et solidaire" (*Message pour la Journée mondiale de la paix du 1er Janvier 2000*, n. 13). À l'entrée du nouveau millénaire, notre monde demeure marqué par de nombreuses contradictions dont l'une des plus voyantes est celle de peuples entiers aux prises avec des conditions de vie qui ne respectent pas la dignité des personnes, pendant que des privilégiés profitent largement des immenses possibilités de la croissance économique, culturelle et technologique. Je voudrais renouveler ici mon appel à la solidarité en faveur des pays plus démunis, notamment sur le continent africain. En effet, alors que de nombreuses nations sont affrontées aux nouveaux problèmes posés par la mondialisation, il est nécessaire de faire preuve d'imagination pour repenser la coopération internationale et pour parvenir à l'établissement d'une véritable culture de solidarité. Ainsi, tout en favorisant le sens des valeurs morales universelles, notamment par la lutte contre toutes les formes de corruption, on pourra contribuer au développement des pays économiquement moins avancés et permettre au plus grand nombre de bénéficier de ses fruits.

4. Dans votre pays, les relations entre chrétiens et musulmans sont généralement bonnes, et les collaborations en vue du bien commun sont habituelles. En effet, il est heureux et indispensable pour l'affermissement de l'unité nationale que les différentes communautés religieuses qui composent le pays recherchent toujours plus à mettre en valeur ce qui les unit, sans toutefois nier ce qui les sépare, afin de donner une qualité toujours plus grande à la vie qu'elles partagent au quotidien. La consolidation des relations fraternelles entre tous les citoyens comporte l'exigence d'une éducation solide des personnes, en particulier des jeunes générations, à l'acceptation et à l'estime des autres. Ainsi que j'ai eu récemment l'occasion de l'affirmer, "il est capital d'enseigner aux jeunes les chemins du respect et de la compréhension, afin qu'ils ne soient pas conduits à faire un mauvais usage de la religion elle-même pour promouvoir ou pour justifier la haine et la violence" (*Discours à la Mosquée Omeyyade, Damas, 6 mai 2001*, n. 3).

5. En cette heureuse occasion, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, permettez-moi d'adresser mes chaleureuses salutations aux Évêques et aux catholiques de votre pays. Je les encourage vivement dans leur marche à la suite du Christ, afin que le grand Jubilé, qu'ils ont célébré avec ferveur, porte des fruits abondants pour le plus grand bien de leurs familles et de toute la société. Qu'en collaboration avec leurs compatriotes, ils continuent à travailler ardemment à l'édification d'une société toujours plus fraternelle et accueillante à toutes les personnes qui souffrent ou qui sont dans la détresse.

6. Au moment où vous commencez votre mission auprès du Saint-Siège, je vous offre mes meilleurs vœux. Soyez assuré que vous trouverez toujours ici un accueil attentif et une compréhension cordiale auprès de mes collaborateurs.

Sur Votre Excellence, sur sa famille, sur le peuple guinéen et sur ses dirigeants, j'invoque de grand cœur l'abondance des Bénédiction divines.

S.E. il Signor Abraham Doukouré
Ambasciatore di Guinea

È nato il 18 ottobre 1943.

È sposato ed ha cinque figli.

È laureato in Ingegneria.

Ha ricoperto, tra gli altri, i seguenti uffici: Segretario e, quindi, Consigliere della Missione Permanente della Repubblica di Guinea presso l'O.N.U. a New York (1975-1976); Incaricato d'Affari presso la medesima rappresentanza (1976-1979); Capo del Protocollo della Presidenza della Repubblica (1979-1980); Ambasciatore in Canada (1980-1984); Consigliere del Ministro degli Esteri (1985-1987); Direttore del dipartimento "Affari politici e culturali", Ministero degli Esteri (1987-1992); Direttore nazionale della *Intégration économique* (1992-1996); Ambasciatore in Nigeria, Benin e Togo (1996-1998); Ambasciatore a disposizione presso il Ministero

degli Esteri (1998-2000).

ÈAmbasciatore anche in Germania.

[00805-03.01] [Texte original: Français]

• DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DELLO SRI LANKA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE

Mr Ambassador,

I am pleased to welcome you today to the Vatican and to receive the Letters of Credence whereby Her Excellency President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga appoints you Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka to the Holy See. I am grateful for the cordial greetings and good wishes which you bring from the President and the Government, and I ask you to convey to Her Excellency the assurance of my prayers for the peace, harmony and prosperity of the entire nation.

In 1995 I had the joy of visiting your country, whose natural beauty has earned it the name "Pearl of the Indian Ocean". The hospitality and unfailingly kindness of the people of Sri Lanka left a lasting impression on me, and during my stay I was able to see how the cultural and religious variety of the peoples of the island has deeply marked your nation's history and identity. The various religious groups have each made an important contribution to the development of the nation as a whole. You have drawn attention to the fact that the followers of these religions have a long tradition of living together in harmony and mutual respect. This is in keeping with the authentic spirit of all the major world religions, while intolerance and violence in the name of religion is a travesty of their genuine spirit.

Authentic religious conviction leads to the promotion of common values essential for the good of society, such as respect for the transcendent dimension of life, openness to others and a deep sense of the inalienable dignity of every human person. Attention to the place of the transcendent in human life is a prerequisite for genuine development, since the person and society need not only material progress but spiritual and religious values as well (cf. *Centesimus Annus*, 61). As the tragic experiences of the century we have just left behind teach us, neglect of the spiritual dimension of life leads inevitably to various forms of injustice against the most vulnerable: the unborn, the elderly, the weak. For this reason, the traditional Sri Lankan respect for religion is a gift to be treasured and protected. It is also essential for spiritual leaders to work together in a spirit of dialogue and cooperation to ensure that religion remains a force for peace and mutual understanding. Civil society, for its part, must guarantee the religious freedom necessary to ensure the harmonious coexistence of the followers of all religions, a freedom which, as you have mentioned, is guaranteed by your country's Constitution.

In recent years Sri Lanka has been tragically affected by conflict, causing much suffering and terrible loss of life, sadly even in recent weeks. We must hope that the efforts being made to find a peaceful and equitable solution to the underlying causes will lead the parties involved to abandon the ways of violence and engage in patient and persevering negotiation. A just peace must be based upon the protection and promotion of the fundamental rights of all citizens, as well as upon respect for their cultural and religious traditions, in conformity with the demands of the common good. The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka, whose members come from all ethnic groups, is doing all it can to promote a climate of dialogue and foster peace. As you know, the Church always supports those initiatives which have as their aim the establishment of a just peace based on respect for human dignity.

One of the major challenges facing many countries and the international community as a whole is the need to promote a more intense dialogue between cultures and traditions. The United Nations Organization has drawn attention to the urgency of this need by declaring 2001 the "International Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations". Culture shapes individuals and peoples, who in turn express themselves through it. Every culture involves a particular vision of social, political and economic life, and at its heart is a specific understanding of the fundamental questions which affect people's lives, including religious ones. Man is a being who seeks the truth and strives to live in accordance with it. From the search for truth, which never fades and is renewed in every generation, the culture of a nation derives its character (cf. *Centesimus Annus*, 49-50). Different cultures "are basically different ways of facing the question of the meaning of personal existence" (*ibid.*, 24). There is a need

to respect the uniqueness of every culture, but also to understand cultural diversity "within the broader horizon of the unity of the human race" (*Message for World Day of Peace 2001*, No. 7). Understanding and communion between cultures "opens the mind to the mutual acceptance and genuine collaboration demanded by the human family's basic vocation to unity" (*ibid.*, 10).

It is now twenty-five years since the first Ambassador of Sri Lanka to the Holy See, Mr Ediriwira R. Sarachchandra, presented his Letters of Credence to my predecessor Pope Paul VI. During these years, the bonds of friendship between your country and the Holy See have been strengthened and consolidated, and your presence here today is a testimony to these good relations. You have spoken very kindly of the Church's contribution to the betterment of society in such areas as education and social development. In accordance with her Divine Founder's command to love our neighbour as ourselves, the Church will continue to make efforts to ensure that people have the possibility of living a more dignified and fulfilled life, in keeping with the transcendent calling of every human person.

Mr Ambassador, as you assume your responsibilities within the diplomatic community accredited to the Holy See, I offer you my good wishes for the successful fulfilment of your high mission. I assure you that the various offices and departments of the Roman Curia will always be ready to assist you. Upon yourself and upon the beloved people of Sri Lanka I invoke abundant divine blessings.

S.E. il Signor Prasad Kariyawasam
Ambasciatore dello Sri Lanka

È nato il 21 marzo 1954.

È sposato ed ha due figli.

È laureato all'Università di Peradeniya (1978).

In servizio diplomatico dal 1981, ha ricoperto incarichi presso le Ambasciate dello Sri Lanka a Ginevra (Ufficio delle Nazioni Unite), in Arabia Saudita e negli Stati Uniti d'America. È stato inoltre Alto Commissario aggiunto in India, con rango d'Ambasciatore.

Ha svolto funzioni direttive presso il Ministero degli Affari Esteri, tra cui quello di portavoce del Ministero.

Ha partecipato a numerose conferenze internazionali.

Attualmente è Rappresentante Permanente dello Sri Lanka presso l'Ufficio delle Nazioni Unite ed Istituzioni Specializzate a Ginevra.

[00806-02.01] [Original text: English]

• DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DELLA MONGOLIA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE

Signor Ambasciatore!

1. Sono lieto di accogliere le lettere con le quali il Signor Presidente della Repubblica, Sua Eccellenza Natsagjin Bagabandi, La accredita quale Ambasciatore Straordinario e Plenipotenziario della Mongolia presso la Santa Sede. Desidero manifestarLe viva riconoscenza per le gentili parole che all'inizio della Sua missione ha voluto rivolgermi, illustrando gli alti principi a cui intende ispirarne l'adempimento.

Nel ringraziare, poi, per i cordiali sentimenti che il Capo dello Stato ha voluto nuovamente esprimermi, Le chiedo di rendersi interprete presso di Lui, come pure presso le Autorità del Governo della Mongolia, della profonda stima e della costante considerazione con la quale seguo il cammino del nobile Popolo che Ella rappresenta.

Serbo un vivo ricordo della visita che il 5 giugno dello scorso anno il Signor Presidente della Mongolia ha voluto rendermi, per riaffermare i rapporti di reciproco rispetto e di mutuo dialogo esistenti tra la Sede Apostolica e il Popolo mongolo. E' mio vivo auspicio che essi proseguano e si intensifichino anche per contribuire all'edificazione di un mondo più giusto e solidale.

A buona ragione Ella ha voluto far menzione della lunga tradizione di tolleranza e di dialogo che caratterizza il popolo della Mongolia, ormai definitivamente entrato nell'arena mondiale con propria e piena sovranità.

2. Nel 2006 si celebrerà l'800° anniversario della fondazione dello Stato mongolo. E' un evento che riveste un'indubbia importanza e offre l'opportunità di ripercorrere il lungo itinerario storico sin qui compiuto. E' pure l'occasione per evocare i secolari legami che segnano le relazioni tra la Mongolia e la Santa Sede. Sono relazioni che risalgono lontano nel tempo. Già, infatti, nel marzo del 1245, il mio predecessore Innocenzo IV inviò una missione diplomatica al campo del khan Batu, giunta successivamente al campo di Kuyuk "gran re e al popolo dei Tartari", presso la Sira Ordu della capitale Karakorum. Dell'indimenticabile missione di fra' Giovanni da Pian del Carpine ci resta la pregevole *Historia Mongolorum quos nos Tartaros appellamus*. Come pure si conservano interamente le memorie delle missioni di Argun khan presso Onorio IV e Niccolò IV. Si può affermare che, nonostante le inevitabili difficoltà, non si sia mai interrotto questo dialogo rispettoso, come pure non è venuta meno l'attenzione lungimirante fra la Mongolia e la Sede Apostolica.

A questo proposito, mi piace evocare la cordialità con cui il mio predecessore, il venerato Pontefice Niccolò IV, si rivolgeva al principe Kharbenda, esortandolo a non abbandonare le sane tradizioni del suo popolo, dopo essersi fatto cristiano. "Con affetto ti consigliamo – scriveva nel 1291 – di non far alcun mutamento nelle costumanze, nel vestito o vitto tradizionale del tuo Paese, affinché non sorga motivo di dissenso o di scandalo contro la tua persona" (*BF IV*, 530). Oltre al rispetto di queste tradizioni popolari, il Papa raccomandava di non abbandonarne la legittima fisionomia culturale.

I contatti tra i Mongoli e la Chiesa di Roma proseguirono con frutto anche in seguito. Lo testimoniano, tra l'altro, le parole scritte dal gran khan Gasan al Papa Bonifacio VIII, e le missioni di Giovanni da Montecorvino e Odorico da Pordenone.

3. In Mongolia da lungo tempo si registra la presenza di comunità cristiane fiorenti. Al loro arrivo, con piacevole sorpresa, gli evangelizzatori ebbero modo di constatare la grande tolleranza di quel popolo nei confronti dei discepoli di Cristo. Lo spirito di dialogo instauratosi tra il cristianesimo e la religione maggioritaria dello Stato mongolo favorì reciproci contatti e scambi rispettosi e fecondi. Purtroppo, successive vicende storiche hanno portato a un progressivo mutuo estraniamento.

La Chiesa, però, allora come anche oggi, "considera con sincero rispetto quei modi di vivere, quei precetti e quelle dottrine che, quantunque in molti punti differiscano da quanto essa stessa crede e propone, tuttavia non raramente riflettono un raggio di quella Verità che illumina tutti gli uomini". Perciò "essa esorta i suoi figli affinché, con prudenza e carità, per mezzo del dialogo e la collaborazione con i seguaci delle altre religioni... riconoscano, conservino e facciano progredire i beni spirituali e morali, e i valori socioculturali che si trovano in essi" (*Nostra aetate*, 2).

Da nove anni la Chiesa Cattolica ha potuto tornare ad operare tra l'amato popolo del Paese che Ella qui rappresenta. Essa è mossa dal desiderio di servire le genti della Mongolia, prestando la sua opera nel campo dell'educazione e dello sviluppo sociale. I cristiani non mancheranno di offrire il loro sostegno a programmi che possano ulteriormente arricchire il patrimonio conoscitivo e specialmente l'inserimento delle giovani generazioni mongole nel mondo moderno, segnato da tanti e rapidi mutamenti sociali, aiutandoli al tempo stesso a preservare la loro specifica identità culturale.

La Santa Sede, poi, è quanto mai vicina al Suo Paese e alle sofferenze del Suo Popolo a causa anche delle calamità naturali che l'hanno colpito di recente. Essa sostiene, altresì, gli sforzi che il Suo Governo sta facendo per tessere un dialogo sempre più proficuo con altri popoli. Per quanto è nelle sue possibilità, la Sede Apostolica non ha mancato di operare, e continuerà a farlo, affinché la comunità internazionale sia solidale con il Popolo

mongolo e lo sostenga con generosità.

4. Signor Ambasciatore, mentre Ella si accinge ad assumere l'alto compito affidatoLe, desidero assicurarLe la mia benevolenza ed ogni opportuno aiuto per il fruttuoso espletamento della Sua alta missione presso questa Santa Sede.

Voglia cortesemente trasmettere al Signor Presidente della Mongolia, alle Autorità del Governo e al caro Popolo da Lei qui rappresentato l'espressione della mia spirituale vicinanza, unita a un fervido augurio di prosperità e progresso nella pace e nella giustizia. Avvaloro questi miei cordiali sentimenti con la preghiera a Dio, affinché scendano copiose su di Lei e su coloro dei quali Ella si fa interprete le benedizioni del Cielo.

S.E. il Signor Chuluuny Batjargal
Ambasciatore della Mongolia

È nato il 15 ottobre 1946.

È sposato ed ha tre figli.

Ha compiuto studi universitari in Pedagogia in patria (1966-1967).

È stato alunno dell'Istituto Statale di Relazioni Internazionali (Mosca 1967-1973) e dell'Università di Firenze (1990-1991).

Ha svolto le funzioni di Addetto, e quindi, di Segretario dell'Ambasciata di Mongolia a Mosca (1980-1987);

È stato Capo dell'Ufficio del Protocollo presso il Consiglio dei Ministri (1987-1990), Capo dell'Ufficio del Protocollo del Governo Mongolo (1990-1993) e Capo del Protocollo dello Stato (1993-2000).

Dal 2000 è Direttore del Dipartimento di "Public Administration Management" presso il Ministero degli Affari Esteri.

È residente a Ulaan-Baatar.

[00807-01.01] [Testo originale: Italiano]

• DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DELLA REPUBBLICA DEL SUD AFRICA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE

Your Excellency,

It is a pleasure for me to welcome you to the Vatican and to accept the Letters of Credence appointing you Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of South Africa to the Holy See. I am grateful for the cordial greetings which you bring from President Thabo Mbeki and the people of your beloved nation, and I ask you kindly to convey to them the assurance of my continued prayers for the progress, peace and prosperity of your country.

The World Conference on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance which South Africa will be hosting later this year provides an excellent opportunity — not only for your nation and the continent of Africa, but indeed for the entire international community — to address a matter of crucial importance for all peoples. Even though conflicts based on ethnic and national origins have already exacted a devastating toll on humanity in the century just past, such deplorable attitudes continue to represent an ominous spectre on the world stage. At the dawn of the new millennium, therefore, the entire family of nations does well to reaffirm its commitment to recognize, uphold and promote the fundamental dignity and inalienable rights of every human being. This is the sure path to overcoming prejudices and to combatting every form of racism; it is the way that

will increase awareness that all people belong to a single human family, willed and gathered together by Almighty God himself.

The recent "rebirth" of your own nation, based on the rejection of segregation and discrimination so that all citizens together may walk the path of unity and brotherhood, is a hope-filled and encouraging sign for societies that are struggling with similar problems. Peace itself starts to become a tangible reality when the human spirit is determined to reject the path of division and conflict in order to follow that of forgiveness and reconciliation. Such peace calls for the strength of an unyielding courage capable of overcoming the blind vindictiveness which would resort to forms of violence. As your own history has shown, although it is important that the truth about the past should be known and responsibility laid where it is due, it is even more important that the delicate process of building a just and harmonious multiracial society should go forward.

What is essential now is that individuals, families and entire peoples should be enabled to become truly active participants in and beneficiaries of that economic and political development envisaged by the leaders of various African nations in the "Millennium African Programme". In its forward-looking and far-reaching objectives, this joint endeavour should be built on the vision of the uniqueness of every human being, founded on the inviolability of the dignity of the human person. We would all like to see a world in which individuals are not forced into the anonymity that comes from collectivity or the overpowering influence of institutions, structures or systems. As an individual, a person is not a number or simply a link in a chain, and even less an impersonal element in some system. In the same way, peoples and nations too have a right to their own full development, which includes not only economic and social aspects but also, importantly, their individual cultural identity and their religious character. For this reason, the need for development must never become an excuse for imposing on others life-styles or cultural expressions which do not reflect a people's individuality and history.

I am pleased to note Your Excellency's recognition of the significant contribution made by the Catholic Church to the building up of South African society, both in the past and today. The Catholics of your country remain committed to working hand in hand with their fellow citizens as active participants in the political, social and cultural advancement of the nation, especially in the battle against poverty, illiteracy and AIDS. To this end, Church personnel, including many missionaries, members of religious communities as well as lay men and women, dedicate their services in the fields of education, social services and health care. 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 your Government and the public authorities will welcome this service on the part of the Church by assisting the missionaries and others as they seek to continue these efforts aimed at ensuring an ever brighter future for South Africa and its people.

Madame Ambassador, as you begin your diplomatic mission to the Holy See, please know that you can count on any assistance which you may need in the fulfilment of your responsibilities. As I express my good wishes for the success of your work, I cordially invoke upon you and upon the leaders and people of the Republic of South Africa the abundant blessings of Almighty God.

S.E. la Signora Patricia Nozipho January-Bardill
Ambasciatore della Repubblica del Sud Africa

È nata il 21 agosto 1950.

È sposata con tre figli (adottati).

Ha compiuto studi superiori di Inglese, di Filosofia e di Scienze dell'Educazione. Ha conseguito un *master* in Linguistica applicata ed un diploma in Gestione delle Risorse Umane.

Ha ricoperto, tra gli altri, i seguenti incarichi: Insegnante; Direttrice di un'Organizzazione non governativa operante nel campo della formazione degli adulti; Consulente dei Presidenti del Parlamento per i processi di trasformazione istituzionale e di democratizzazione; Membro fondatore di due agenzie di consulenza, in particolare per la promozione delle persone svantaggiate dalla segregazione razziale; Consulente per la formazione e l'organizzazione di enti pubblici di servizi sociali ed associazioni di volontariato.

Attualmente è Ambasciatore anche in Svizzera.

Fa inoltre parte della Commissione di esperti delle Nazioni Unite per l'Eliminazione delle Discriminazioni razziali.

È impegnata nella difesa dei diritti umani e della giustizia sociale (riabilitazione della popolazione nera, promozione della donna, assistenza ai malati di AIDS), operando in alcuni organismi attivi nel settore.

È autrice di varie pubblicazioni in materia sociale.

[00808-02.01] [Original text: English]

• DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DEL GAMBIA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE

Mr Ambassador,

As you present the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of The Gambia 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 His Excellency President Yahya Jammeh, I ask you to convey to him my own cordial greetings and the assurance of my prayers for the peace and well-being of the nation.

Although nine years have passed since my Pastoral Visit to The Gambia, the memories of the time I spent among your people remain vividly etched in my mind. My travels to the various countries of the world are made principally as Bishop of Rome and Successor of Saint Peter in the service of the universal Church. At the same time, however, they enable me to show the solidarity of the Church with the world's peoples as they strive for peace, human development and a correct response to the moral and ethical questions facing them today.

It is in this context that I am pleased to note Your Excellency's remarks identifying education and religious values as key factors in creating a culture of morality and a sense of personal and collective responsibility for the future. The Catholic Church will always be a staunch and tireless defender of universal, unchanging moral norms, a role she exercises for no other purpose than to serve man's true freedom. Since "there can be no freedom apart from or in opposition to the truth, the categorical — unyielding and uncompromising — defence of the absolutely essential demands of man's personal dignity must be considered the way and the condition for the very existence of freedom" (*Veritatis Splendor*, 96). Moreover, this service on the part of the Church is directed not only to individuals but to all mankind: it is for every person and for the political community and human society as such. "These norms in fact represent the unshakable foundation and solid guarantee of a just and peaceful human coexistence, and hence of genuine democracy, which can come into being and develop only on the basis of the equality of all its members, who possess common rights and duties" (*ibid.*).

There exist, then, fundamental moral rules of social life entailing specific demands with which both public authorities and private citizens must comply, and which the international community too is required to respect. This underlying morality must guide all aspects of social and political life. It is in fact a sad commentary that at the dawn of this new millennium serious forms of social and economic injustice, and of political domination, are still affecting entire peoples and nations in different parts of the world, on your own continent of Africa and elsewhere. There is growing indignation on the part of countless men and women whose fundamental rights continue to be trampled upon and held in contempt. For this reason, there is an ever clearer sense of the acute need for radical personal and social renewal in the areas of justice, honesty, openness and solidarity.

The road ahead, however, remains long and difficult. Bringing about the necessary changes will require great effort, especially on account of the number and gravity of the causes which give rise to and aggravate the many situations of injustice present in our world. But by recognizing and abiding by timeless, objective truths — those universal norms in obedience to which man attains full freedom and achieves his full identity — we will find the basis for secure and just relations between people. The Holy See will always speak out in the international forum, loudly and clearly, to defend and promote the transcendent dignity of the human person. It is by virtue of

this dignity that all people — the healthy and the infirm, the young and the old, the strong and the weak, the wealthy and the poor, the born and the unborn — are the subjects of rights which no one may violate: no individual, group, class, nation, State or international body.

The Gambia is a country with a proud tradition of peaceful coexistence among its people, a country in which the ideals of tolerance, justice and freedom are held in high regard. Gambian Catholics, although a minority, see themselves as true sons and daughters of their land, an integral part of the nation. The Catholic community will continue to do all it can to support a development that benefits everyone, especially through the Church's activity in the fields of education, health care and social services. Promoting policies of justice, solidarity and service of the common good is the path along which Gambian society can move with confidence towards an ever more widespread prosperity and stable peace. I thank you for your recognition of the contribution which the Catholic Church has made and continues to make to your nation.

Mr Ambassador, as you begin your mission I assure you of any assistance which you may need in the fulfilment of your duties. I am confident that your work will serve to strengthen the good relations which already exist between the Holy See and the Republic of The Gambia. Upon Your Excellency and all the people of your country I invoke the abundant blessing of Almighty God.

S.E. il Signor Gibril Seman Joof
Ambasciatore del Gambia

È nato il 6 giugno 1952.

È sposato ed ha sei figli.

Ha compiuto studi superiori in Telecomunicazione in patria (Banjul) ed in Inghilterra (Yorkshire, Bristol, Baths).

È stato Responsabile della Rete Radiofonica del Gambia (1981-1983); Ufficiale (1983-1993) ed Ispettore generale della Polizia (1994-1996); Console del Gambia in Guinea Bissau (1996-1997); È stato Consigliere di Ambasciata in Senegal (1999-2000).

Ha partecipato a numerose conferenze internazionali.

Attualmente è Alto Commissario a Londra.

[00809-02.01] [Original text: English]

DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE A 9 AMBASCIATORI IN OCCASIONE DELLA PRESENTAZIONE COLLETTIVA DELLE LETTERE CREDENZIALI

Pubblichiamo di seguito il discorso che Giovanni Paolo II ha rivolto questa mattina nella Sala Clementina agli Ecc.mi nuovi Ambasciatori presso la Santa Sede, al termine dello scambio delle Lettere Credenziali di ciascun Ambasciatore con il Santo Padre:

Excellences,

1. Je vous accueille avec plaisir au Vatican au moment où vous me remettez les Lettres qui vous accréditent comme Ambassadeurs extraordinaires et plénipotentiaires de vos pays: le Népal, la Tunisie, l'Estonie, la Zambie, la Guinée, le Sri Lanka, la Mongolie, l'Afrique du Sud et la Gambie. Votre présence me donne l'occasion de saluer vos Responsables politiques et tous ceux qui ont la charge de servir le bien commun dans

les fonctions qui leur sont confiées. Je voudrais saluer cordialement tous vos compatriotes, les assurant de mes pensées ferventes à leur intention. Je vous remercie vivement des messages cordiaux dont vous êtes porteurs de la part de vos Chefs d'État respectifs; je vous saurais gré de bien vouloir leur exprimer en retour mes salutations déférentes et mes vœux chaleureux pour leurs personnes et pour la haute mission qu'ils sont appelés à remplir.

2. Au cours de mon pèlerinage jubilaire sur les pas de saint Paul en Grèce, en Syrie et à Malte, j'ai suivi avec attention les événements dramatiques qui se déroulaient dans la région du Proche-Orient. Je voudrais à nouveau profiter de la présence d'un nombre important de diplomates pour renouveler avec une plus grande force mon appel à la paix sur tous les continents, invitant les Responsables de la vie sociale à prendre des décisions courageuses qui engageront les peuples de manière résolue sur la voie de la paix et de la réconciliation. La paix et la sécurité des personnes et des communautés sont des biens essentiels. On ne peut envisager qu'un pays construise son avenir en faisant abstraction des peuples qui l'entourent ou des diversités culturelles et ethniques qui le composent. Il convient que toutes les instances locales, nationales et internationales s'engagent pour que se résolvent enfin des conflits qui ont déjà fait trop de victimes innocentes. Dans ce domaine, le rôle de la diplomatie est particulièrement important. J'appelle donc de tous mes vœux un engagement de tous les services diplomatiques en faveur d'une résolution négociée des différents conflits et des foyers de tensions existant dans les différents continents. Un tel engagement contribuera à redonner confiance et espérance aux populations soumises depuis trop longtemps à des situations d'instabilité.

3. Au moment où vous inaugurez votre mission auprès du Siège apostolique, je vous offre mes vœux les plus cordiaux. Je demande au Très-Haut de faire descendre sur vous l'abondance de ses Bénédictions, ainsi que sur les membres de vos familles, sur vos collaborateurs et sur les habitants des nations que vous représentez.

[00810-03.01] [Texte original: Français]
