

Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur

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COMMUNIQUE FROM ARCHBISHOP MURPHY PAKIAM

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH THE HOLY SEE

I write this letter upon my return from meeting the Holy Father, His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI and the Secretary of State of the Holy See, His Eminence Tarcisio Cardinal Bertone. His Holiness sends his apostolic blessings to all Catholics in Malaysia.

A Historical Moment for the Church in Malaysia

The recent visit of the Honourable Prime Minister of Malaysia, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak and a Malaysian delegation to the Holy See follows the decision of the Government of Malaysia to establish formal diplomatic relations with the Holy See. This is indeed a historic moment for the Church in Malaysia after years of negotiations which had begun during the time of my predecessors. Upon the joint invitation of the Holy See and the Government of Malaysia, and with the blessing of the Bishops Conference of Malaysia, I was humbled to be part of this process and privileged to witness the formalization of the relations.

Gratitude for Prayers and Support

I wish to personally extend my sincere thanks to my fellow bishops and all clergy, religious and laity, for their prayers and continued support during these times as our beloved country faces increasing challenges.

Significance of establishing diplomatic relations

The establishment of diplomatic relations will allow the Catholic Church, from the perspective of an international polity, to have a greater voice in Malaysian society in order to prophetically proclaim the values which it defends and safeguards.

Of primary importance is the dignity of the human person, the right to life in all stages of development; the right to freedom of expression, of conscience, of religion, in all its dimensions and not only as freedom of worship; the right to be given a central place in social, cultural, economic and political life.

The second value and principle which such diplomatic relations would envisage is the promotion and defense of peace and peaceful co-existence, in the midst of ethnic, religious and cultural differences; the promotion of conflict resolution and post-conflict reconciliation and healing.

A third principle of the Holy See in wishing to establish diplomatic relations is to provide support to institutions and peoples that foster democracy and dialogue.

Hopes and Aspirations

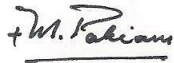
Prior to this meeting, I have conveyed to our Holy Father, through the Apostolic Delegate, His Excellency Archbishop Leopoldo Girelli, the hopes and aspirations of the local church. I believe that these points, if they had not already been raised in the discussions between the Holy Father and the Prime Minister, will be raised in the future through diplomatic channels.

I had communicated to the Holy Father that we hope to see the establishment of an Inter-Religious Council that would include key leaders and representatives from all religious groups; the establishment of a Ministry and the appointment of a full Minister to look into non-Islamic affairs; the establishment of dialogue and links between Islamic institutions in Malaysia and the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies; that our seminaries be allowed to resume the training of priests from the region; the promotion of Christian-Catholic education and training of teachers; and the promotion and defense of democratic values and protection of minority groups in Malaysia.

In the face of overwhelming urgency, this event may seem irrelevant. But I'm reminded by the parable of Jesus which we heard two Sundays ago (Matthew 13:31-32), that draws our attention to the dynamic power of the tiny mustard seed that will eventually grow into the largest shrub. All our efforts may seem insignificant but it is our hope that by the grace of God, the establishment of relations will indeed become the seed for a better Malaysia.

Let us continue to place our hope in prayer.

Yours in Christ,



Most Rev. Murphy Pakiam DD
Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur
President,
Catholic Bishops' Conference of Malaysia

Dated this 26th day of July 2011.