



**High Commission of the Republic of the Fiji Islands
United Kingdom**

Credentials Ceremony at the Vatican. 11.00 am. 15 May. 2003

The flight from Heathrow to Leonardo da Vinci airport (also called Fiumicino because of the town) took 2 hours. On arrival, we were met by a Protocol Officer from the Vatican who briefed us on our appointments the following day.

The taxi ride to Rome, 26 Km. away, took 35 minutes and put me back by Euro 45.00. We stayed at Hotel Columbus, a 10-minute walk to the Vatican.

On Tuesday, 13 May, with my wife, I paid courtesy calls on the following:

- (i) 11.15 am His Excellency Gabriele Caccia, Assistant of the Secretariat of State.
- (ii) 12.00 noon His Excellency Leonardo Sandri, Substitute of the Secretariat of State, to whom I delivered the Working Copy of the Letter of Credence.
- (iii) 7.00 pm His Excellency Jean-Louis Tauran, the Secretary for Relations with States (equivalent of Secretary for Foreign Relations).

H.E. G.Caccia briefed us fully on the logistics and the detailed arrangements for the Solemn Audience with His Holiness John Paul II on 15 May. We were told that we would be in the ceremony with 11 other Ambassadors, and Fiji was No. 8 in the group of 12 countries.

At 10.15 am on 15/5/03, 2 cars pulled up at our hotel, with an American, Professor Joseph H. Hagan, designated to be our liaison (protocol) officer. I went in the first car with Prof. Hagan, with Mrs. Boladuadua in the second car. We were led/escorted by 3 outriders from the Precinct of Italian Police attached to the Vatican.

We left the Hotel, went around the Vatican, crossed the River Tiber, approached Castel Sant'Angelo (Castle of the Holy Angel built 590 AD) and followed Via della Conciliazione, the road leading to the Vatican. We went through a tunnel and entered the Courtyard of St. Damaso where we were met by a quarter Guard of Honour of Swiss Guards.

We were met at the venue, the Clementine Hall of the Apostolic Palace, by His Eminence Cardinal Angelo Sodano, the Secretary of State. (On 6/4/84, John Paul II authorised the Secretary of State to "represent the Pontiff as regards civil government and to exercise all the powers and responsibility inherent in temporal sovereignty.")

We sat in a U formation facing the Papal Chair: Australia, Zimbabwe, Syria, Trinidad and Tobago, Ethiopia, Latvia, Georgia, Fiji, Burundi, Vanuatu, Moldova, Pakistan.

At 11.00 am. His Holiness the Pope arrived with his advisors. Starting with the Australian Ambassador we all took our turn being presented to the Holy Father. During my turn, I went

up to the Holy Father, shook hands, handed the Letter of Recall of my predecessor, my own Letter of Credence, and the original of my address for the occasion. His Holiness then handed over his own address accepting the above papers. After receiving the 12th participant, Pakistan, His Holiness then read his speech, in French, to all present. That over, it was then time to present our spouse, family members, and where applicable, other diplomatic staff. 2 Missions were only represented by the Ambassador, while the Australian Ambassador was accompanied by his wife and 6 family/office members. After each country introduction, we had our photograph taken with His Holiness.

The Holy Father then took his leave at 11.27 am, and we all went down to the Courtyard of St. Damaso from where our transport took us back to our hotels.

E. L. Boladuadua
High Commissioner

Some background Notes

Rome was founded by Romulus (the first of 7 Kings of Rome) together with his brother, Remus, in April, 753 BC.

Rome was first governed by Kings (753-510 B.C.); then as a Republic by Consuls (510-30 B.C.); and finally by Emperors (30 B.C. to 476 AD).

During the Middle Ages (493-1400), the Church established its temporal rule and Rome remained the seat of the Papal Court, through the Renaissance (1470-1795), until September 20, 1870, when the Italian army entered Rome and Rome (the Eternal City) became the capital of a united Italy. The unification of Italy also confined the political powers of the Pope to the Vatican. Mussolini's march on Rome in 1922 heralded the beginning of the Fascist government in Italy, which was brought to an end after World War II, and Italy became a Republic in 1946.

The Vatican, a small territory of 108 acres (0.44 sq. km. or 0.2 sq. mile), occupied by St. Peter's Basilica, St. Peter's Square and the Vatican Palaces, is under the sovereignty of the Pope, and it has been called the "Vatican City State" since the Lateran Treaty of 11 February, 1929.

On the right bank of the river Tiber, it is completely self sufficient with its own civil and judicial systems, post office, bank, newspaper/radio station, railway station and supermarket.

Everything in the Vatican goes back to the tomb of St. Peter the apostle upon which Jesus Christ built his church. In his spreading the gospel, Peter (later martyred) was killed in Rome through the order of Emperor Nero in June 67 AD. Through his insistence, he was crucified head downwards. He is recognised as the first Pope. Above Peter's tomb, 2 successive basilicas have arisen: that built by Emperor Constantine in 322 AD, and the present one begun by Pope Julius II in 1506 and completed in 1615 under Pope Paul V.

Pope John Paul II, the 264th Pontiff, Karol Wojtyla by name, was born in Poland on 18/5/20, and was elected on 16 October 1978. He succeeded Mr. Albino Luciano, Pope John Paul I, whose reign only lasted 33 days (26/8/78 to 28/9/78). The 263rd Pope was the first Pope to choose a double name. He declined to have a coronation ceremony.

John Paul II is the first pope of Polish origin - and not Italian – in 455 years (since Adrian VI). He is a theologian, writer and poet. He has spread God's word to promote peace through the world: Mexico, Poland (1979); Ireland, USA, Turkey (1980); Zaire, Congo, Kenya, Upper Volta, Ivory Coast, France, Brazil, Germany (1980); Japan, Philippines (1981). He had an

historic meeting with Atenagora Demetrio I in Constantinople. On May 13th, 1981 - during an audience in St. Peter's - he was seriously wounded in an assassination attempt but in 1982 he started to travel again: Nigeria, Benin, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Portugal (1982); Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Belize, Haiti, Poland, France, Austria (1983). In 1986 he went to Korea, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Fiji, Thailand, Switzerland, Canada and the Dominican Republic. He signed the revision of the Concordat between the Holy See and Italy that had been constituted on February 11th, 1929. In 1985, he went to Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, Trinidad, the Caribbean island of Tobago, Holland and Belgium and, in 1997, to Poland, Lebanon, Sarajevo and Brazil.

In 1998, he went to Cuba, Nigeria, Austria and Croatia and in 1999, to Mexico, Rumania, Slovenia, India and Georgia. He made a pilgrimage to Mt. Sinai, the Holy Land and Fatima in 2000 and in 2001 he went to Greece, Syria, Malta, the Ukraine, Armenia and Kazakhstan. During a trip to Cuba, in 1998, he met with Fidel Castro. His Jubilee for the year 2000 was celebrated, at the same time, in Rome, Jerusalem and Nazareth and extended to the local churches. On February 21st, 2001, he created 42 new Cardinals and, on February 24th, 2002 he led the III Inter-religious Prayer Day in Assisi with the participation of representatives of the major world religions. Pope John II is estimated to have travelled about 1,500,000 kilometres during more than 100 international tours including his travels to North America in 2002. This is the equivalent of having gone around the world about 35 times.