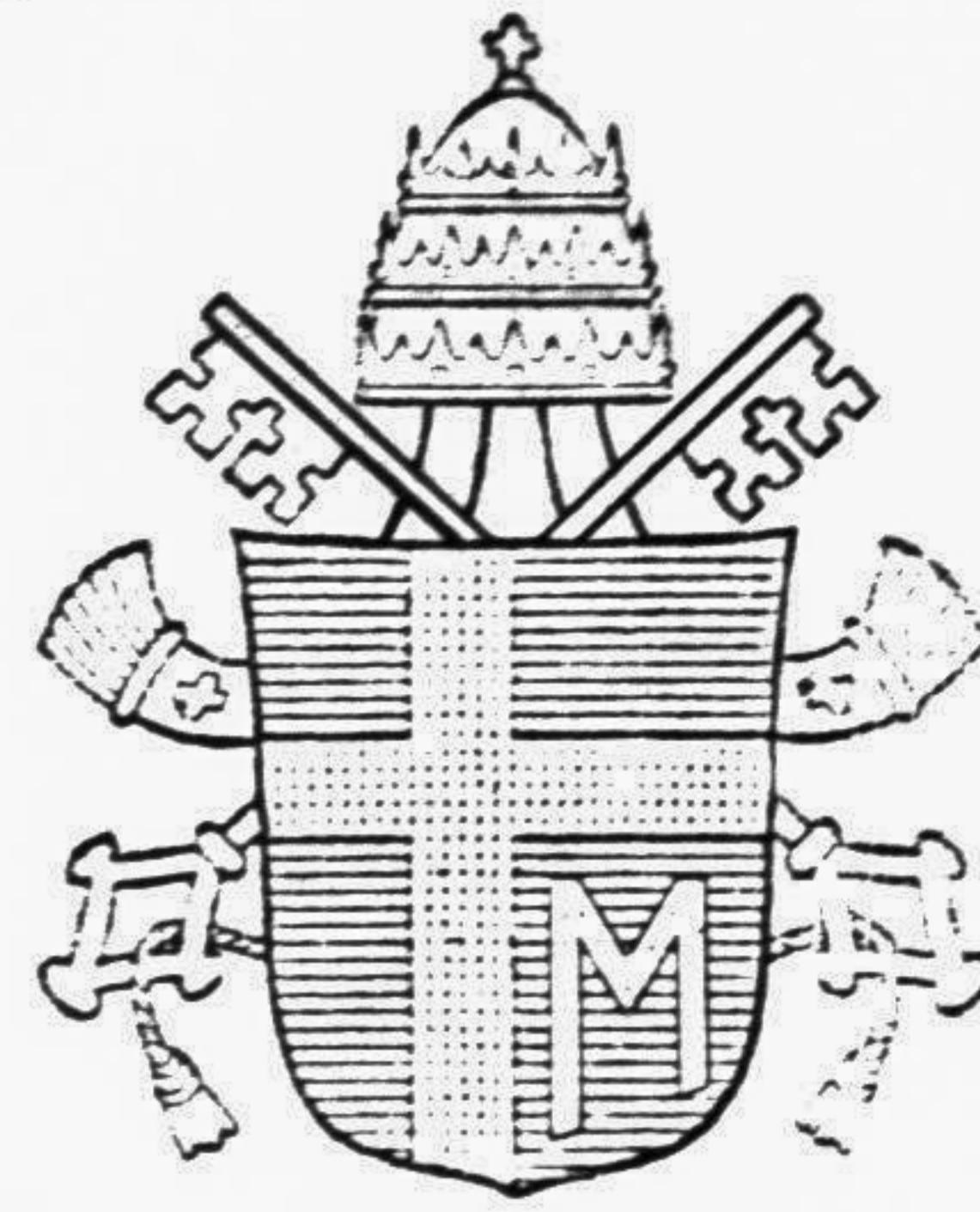
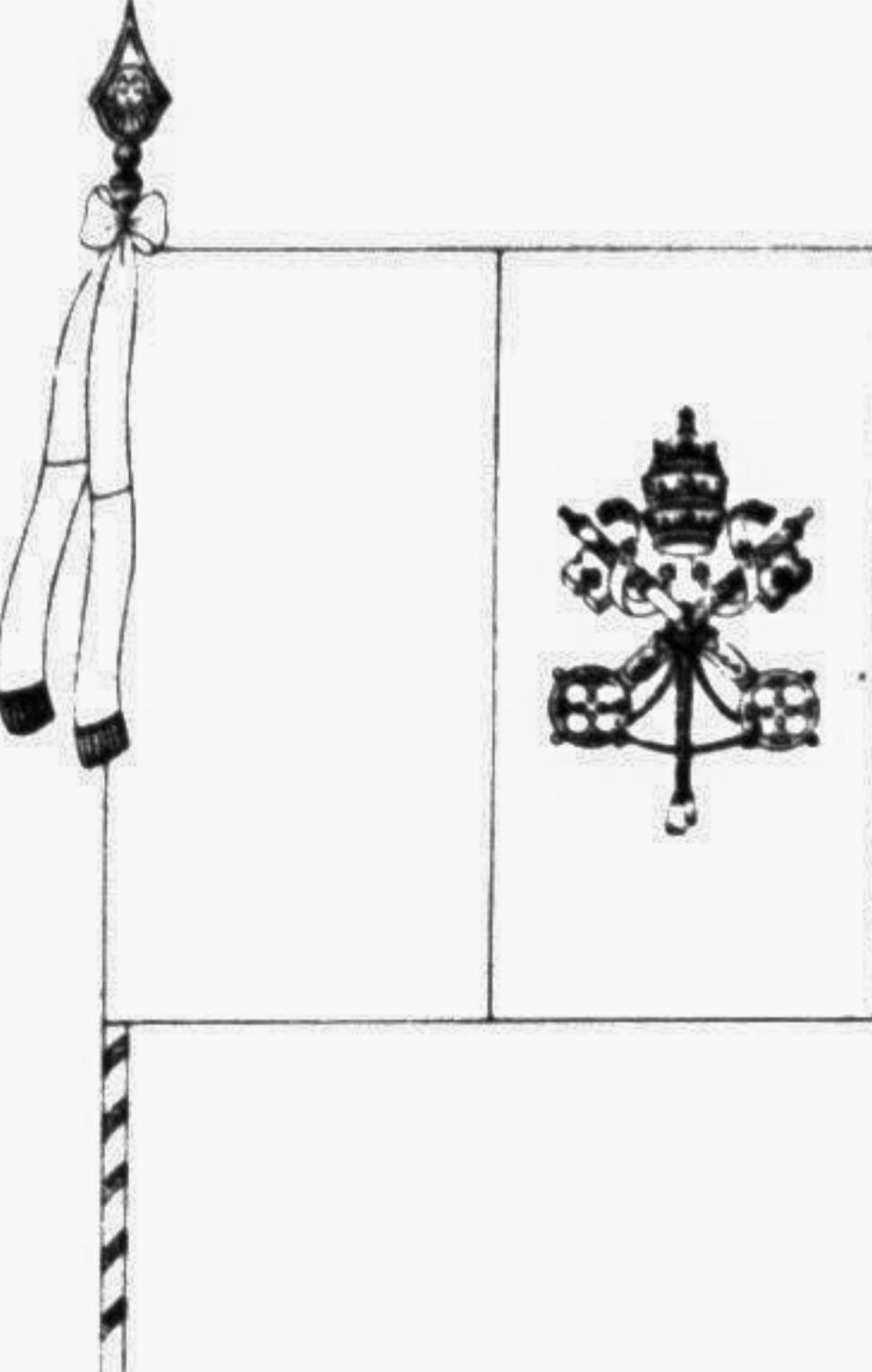


18th Anniversary of the Pontificate of His Holiness John Paul II

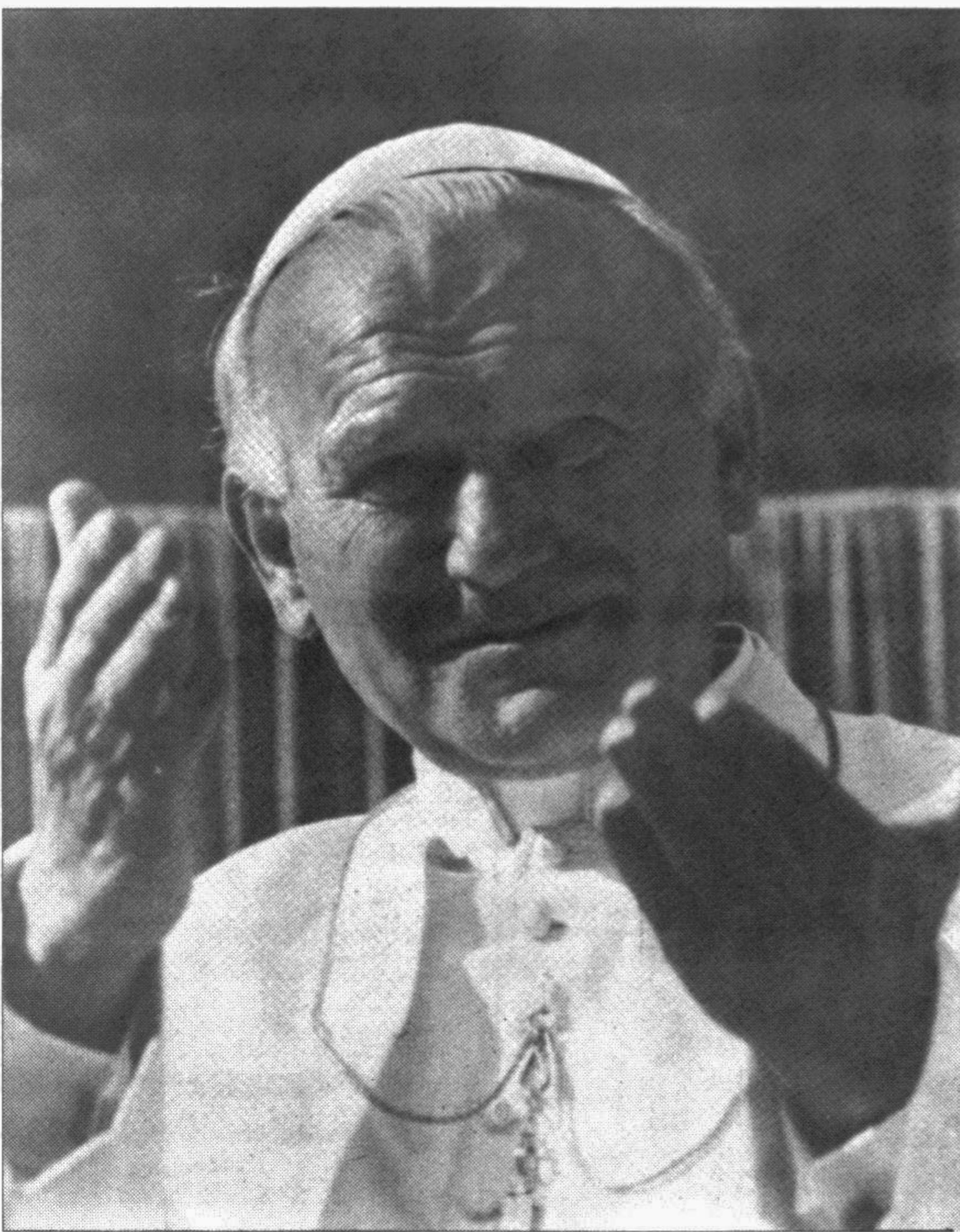
(National Day of Holy See)



The Daily Star

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MESSAGE

Of Monsignor George Antonysamy, Charge d'affaires a.i. of the Apostolic Nunciature in Bangladesh on the occasion of the 18th Anniversary of the Pontificate of His Holiness Pope John Paul II

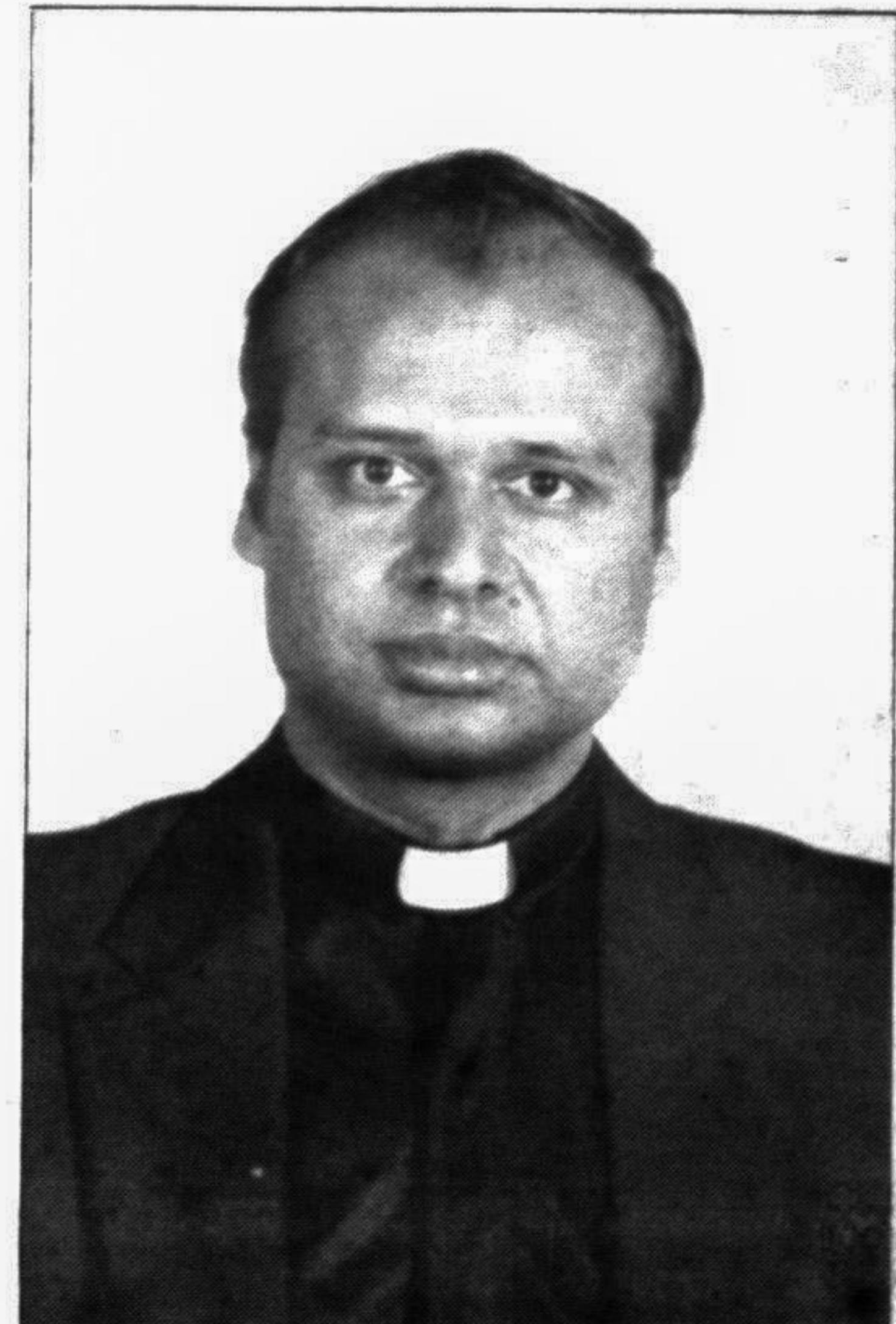
I have great joy and feel much honoured to address you in the following words on this happy occasion of the 18th Anniversary of the assumption of office by the present Supreme Pontiff, His Holiness Pope John Paul II.

Elected on October 16, 1978, the first non-Italian in more than four hundred years, and the first Polish Pope in history, Pope John Paul has been hailed as a truly remarkable man, an international charismatic figure who has captured the minds and hearts of millions throughout the world. So far the Supreme Pontiff has undertaken 74 international journeys to the five continents. In all his undertakings and initiatives Pope John Paul II projects the image of a leader, a staunch defender of human rights, one who takes care of the welfare of humanity and inspires all with religious optimism.

This year in his message of peace for the world, the supreme Pontiff directed his paternal attention towards the helpless children of this world with the confident appeal "Let us give children a future of peace" in order to help them to grow up in an environment of authentic peace. This is their right and it is our duty. The concern of the Pope in this message for the celebration of the World Day of Peace, 1 January 1996, could be summarized as follows: It is the obligation of every adult to create a society in which innocent and blameless children could taste, enjoy and leave to their descendants the real peace. Poverty is the cause of war and other violence and victims of these evils are mostly children. So the Pope assures: "I will continue to point out that all, from the most prominent international organizations to local associations, from Heads of State to ordinary citizens, in everyday actions and at the most significant moments of life, are called upon to make a contribution to peace and to give no support to war."

Together with numerous international and national organizations, the Catholic charitable and educational institutions are playing a vital role in the care of children in Bangladesh. There are about 400 educational and charitable centres spread all over the country for the integral growth of children.

On this eighteenth anniversary of the Pontificate of Pope John Paul II, let us pray for him that God will keep



him in good health for many more years. By his example and teachings he could continue to guide the world with spiritual strength, hope and courage necessary to meet the challenges of our times to construct a world of peace, justice and prosperity.

May the Almighty God shower His abundant blessings on the leaders and the beloved people of Bangladesh!

A Future of Peace for Children

AROUND the world children and childhood are under siege. According to a UNICEF report, in the past ten years alone, about 1.5 million children have died in war; another 4 million have been maimed or disabled; at least 5 million children have become refugees and a further 12 million have been uprooted from their communities. Children make up almost 50 per cent of humanity and are victims of political and economic chaos, everywhere. Knowing this painful situation, Pope John Paul II at various occasions has called the attention of the whole world to the sufferings of these helpless children. Among them two recent initiatives are of importance: 1. The Pope's letter to the world's children at the end of 1994. 2. The annual message of peace to the whole world in 1996 with the title "Let us give children a future of peace."

1. The fourteen-page letter to the world's children in December 1994 is the paternal request of the Pope to pray for the whole humanity so that "it could be a family of God, capable of living in harmony and in peace." In the first-ever letter by a pope to children, John Paul II evoked his own childhood experiences of joy and suffering as young Karol Wojtyla in Poland. In the same letter the pope did not hesitate to express his preoccupation: "But it is also true that in our days, unfortunately, many children in different parts of the world are suffering and being threatened....How can we not care when we see the suffering of so many children, especially when this suffering is in some ways caused by grown-ups?" For example, at the beginning of this century, 90 per cent of war casualties and deaths were military personnel and only 10 per cent civilians. The

figure has now been reversed — it is civilians, and especially children, who suffer the most in wartime.

2. In continuation of his letter to children, Pope John Paul II has addressed the 1996 message of Peace to the

whole world with the invitation to all men of good will, especially to those who have the obligation to safeguard the rights and liberty of the children "who are victims of armed conflicts and other kinds of violence" in today's

society. The twelve page letter has an introduction and five parts where the head of the Catholic Church analyses the exploitation of children in various ways by so called "powerful" for their own benefit. The basic

thought, which goes through the reflection of the pope, is nothing but the concern of every adult in the society to create an atmosphere of peace for the children.

The preoccupation of the Pope concerns especially the

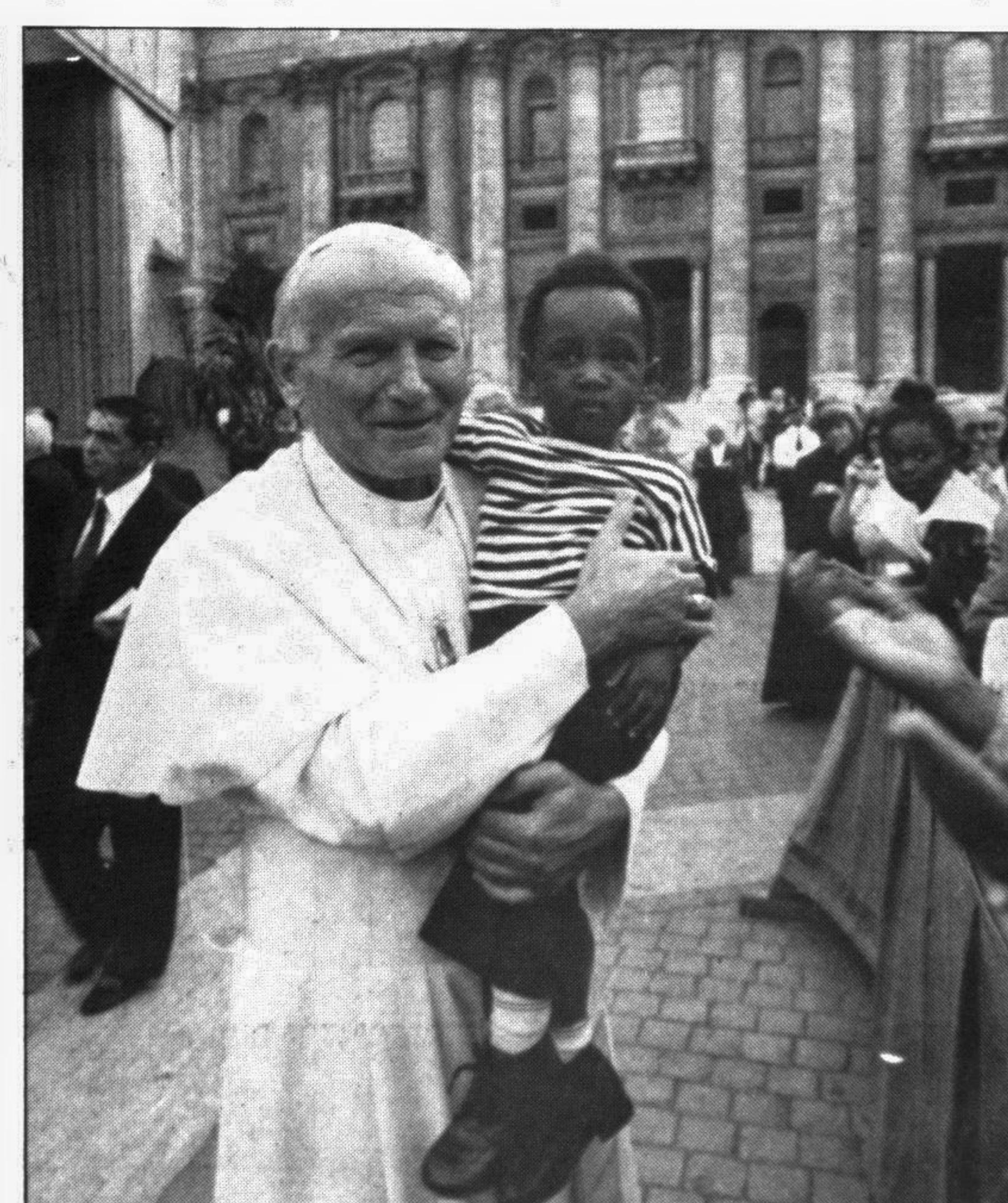
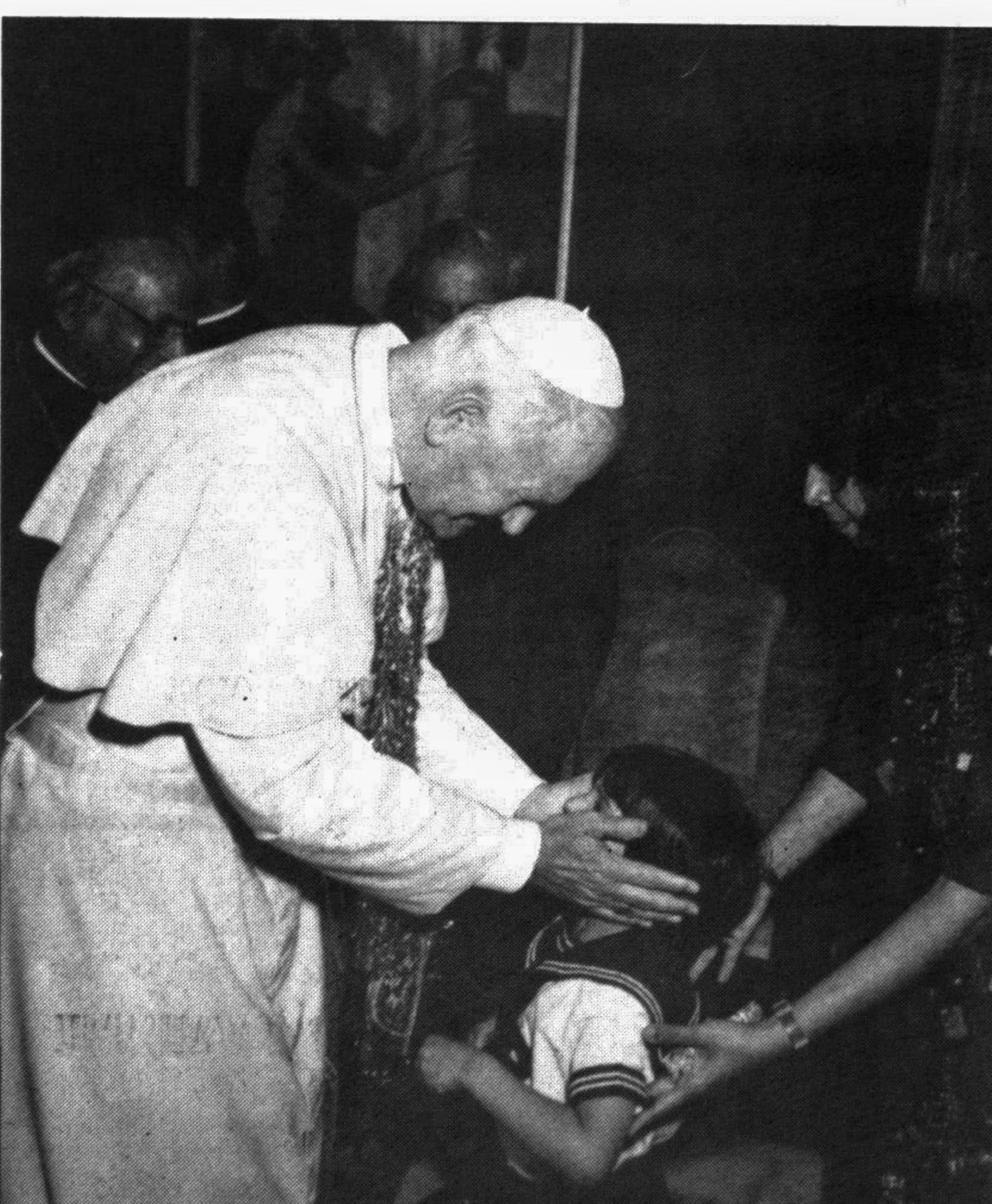
conflicts and several actions of violence in which most of the children are made to be involved forcefully: "I pray that everywhere a harmonious relationship between adults and children will promote a

climate of peace and authentic well-being", he writes, denouncing instead that "sadly many of the world's children are innocent victims of war", while "millions of children suffer from other kinds of violence pre-

sent both in poverty-stricken and in developed societies." Among the examples cited in the message, those who are "forced to work at a tender age," or are bought and sold, so that they can be used for begging or, even worse, forced into prostitution, as in the case of so called "sex tourism".

The Pope, by reiterating "poverty is the cause of inhuman living and working conditions" underlines that poverty is the cause of such callous acts against the children and only the eradication of poverty could liberate them from the injustice caused to them. A Human Development Report published by the UN states that "five hundred and fifty million people are starving, eight hundred million people are malnourished; thirty-four thousand children die daily for lack of food and victims of epidemics run into millions due to debility." This is due to our insensitive attitude to the widespread phenomenon of poverty. Faced with the urgent need to address this profound social problem of poverty, the UN has rightly declared 1996 as the "year of the struggle against poverty". Poverty is a result of individual greed and the way our society and our economy work. Pope Paul VI said in his encyclical "Populorum Progressio" of 1967 that the world is sick because we have ceased to think. He called for a new conscience for our time which is once again reiterated by Pope John Paul II in the encyclical "Sollicitudo Rei Socialis" when he said: "To have a love of preference for the poor."

A special affection on the part of the Roman Pontiff for the infants is distinctly expressed by the appeal already made to the charitable and educative catholic institutions before the Fourth



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