



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO H.E. Mr ALI ACHOUR AMBASSADOR OF MOROCCO
TO THE HOLY SEE***

Monday, 20 February 2006

Mr Ambassador,

I am pleased to welcome you, Your Excellency, at the presentation of the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Morocco to the Holy See.

I thank you for your kind words and for the courteous greetings that His Majesty King Mohammed VI has conveyed to me through you. Please reciprocate by expressing to His Majesty my esteem for the traditional hospitality of acceptance and understanding which for centuries has marked the relations of the Kingdom of Morocco with the Catholic Church. I would be grateful if you will kindly assure His Majesty of my fervent good wishes for himself and for the happiness and prosperity of the noble Moroccan people.

Mr Ambassador, you have told me of the efforts made by your Country that has just celebrated its 50th anniversary of independence, to progress towards a modern, democratic and prosperous future.

One cannot but be delighted at this progress that should enable all Moroccans to live in security and in dignity, so that each one may play an active part in the social and political life of the Country. Indeed, an authentic democracy demands consensus on a certain number of essential values, such as the transcendent dignity of the human person, respect for human rights, the "common good" as the purpose and criterion for the regulation of political life (cf. *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, n. 407).

Moreover, an ever closer collaboration among the countries bordering the Mediterranean, which began several years ago, should make it possible to face with determination and perseverance not

only matters concerning security and peace in the region, but also the question of the development of societies and people with a renewed awareness of the duty of solidarity and justice. For this reason now, more than ever, the Mediterranean is called to be a place of meeting and dialogue between peoples and cultures.

Among the serious problems that the countries bordering the Mediterranean must face, the phenomenon of migration is a major factor in inter-State relations. Migrants from the less privileged regions in search of a better standard of living are coming in ever-greater numbers to knock at Europe's doors. This gives more and more of them an illegal status and sometimes creates situations that seriously threaten people's dignity and safety.

Consequently, the institutions of the host or transit country must take care not to consider migrants as a commodity or a mere work force, and to respect their fundamental rights and human dignity. The precarious situation of so many foreigners should foster solidarity between the nations concerned and contribute to the development of the migrants' countries of origin.

Indeed, these problems cannot be solved by policies that are exclusively national. It is through greater collaboration between all the countries concerned that effective solutions to these distressing situations will be found.

Mr Ambassador, you stressed your Country's contribution to the dialogue between civilizations, cultures and religions. For her part, in the present international context with which we are familiar, the Catholic Church remains convinced that to encourage peace and understanding between peoples and people, it is urgently necessary that religions and their symbols be respected and that believers not be the object of provocations that wound their outlook and religious sentiments.

However, intolerance and violence as a response to offences can never be justified, for this type of response is incompatible with the sacred principles of religion; consequently, we cannot but deplore the actions of those who deliberately exploit the offence caused to religious sentiments to stir up acts of violence, especially since such action is contrary to religion.

For believers, as for all people of good will, the only path that leads to peace and brotherhood is that of respect for the religious convictions and practices of others, so that the practice of the religion a person has freely chosen may be guaranteed to each one.

Mr Ambassador, through you I would also like to address a warm greeting to the members of the Catholic community of Morocco and to their Pastors. May they have at heart to live their Christian vocation joyfully, witnessing ever more generously to the love of God for all men and women, in fruitful collaboration with them all!

At the time when you are beginning your mission to the Holy See, Your Excellency, I offer you my

best wishes for the noble task that awaits you. With my collaborators you will always find the attentive welcome and cordial understanding you may need.

I wholeheartedly invoke an abundance of Blessings from the Most High upon you, Your Excellency, upon your family, your collaborators, the Moroccan People and its leaders.

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