



# The Holy See

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**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI  
TO H.E. MS. HISSA ABDULLA AHMED AL-OTAIBA,  
THE FIRST AMBASSADOR OF THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES  
TO THE HOLY SEE\***

*Thursday, 20 May 2010*

Your Excellency, I am pleased to welcome you to the Vatican and to accept the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United Arab Emirates. On this notable occasion, I would ask you to convey my greetings to His Highness Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahayan. Kindly assure him of my gratitude for the good wishes which you have just expressed on his behalf, and of my prayers for his well-being and that of all the people of the Emirates.

As diplomatic relations between the Holy See and the United Arab Emirates have only recently been established, your presence here today as your country's first Ambassador to the Holy See is a particularly auspicious event. During a joint ceremony with other Ambassadors on 15 April 2008, the President of the United Arab Emirates noted that the Papal Representative "exercises a particular mission, which is above all for the preservation of faith in God and the promotion of intercultural and interreligious dialogue." Faith in the Almighty cannot but lead to love for one's neighbour for, as I wrote recently, "love – caritas – is an extraordinary force which leads people to opt for courageous and generous engagement in the field of justice and peace" (*Caritas in Veritate*, 1).

Love of God and respect for the dignity of one's neighbour motivates the Holy See's diplomacy and shapes the Catholic Church's mission of service to the international community. The Church's action in the field of diplomatic relations promotes peace, human rights and integral development, and thus strives for the authentic progress of all, without regard for race, colour or creed. Indeed, it is towards men and women, understood as unique in their God-given nature, that all politics, culture, technology and development are directed. To reduce the aims of these human

endeavours merely to profit or expediency would be to risk missing the centrality of the human person in his or her integrity as the primary good to be safeguarded and valued, for man is the source, the focus and the aim of all economic and social life (cf. *Caritas in Veritate*, 25). Thus, the Holy See and the Catholic Church take care to highlight the dignity of man in order to maintain a clear and authentic vision of humanity on the international stage and in order to muster new energy in the service of what is best for the development of peoples and nations.

Your Excellency, the United Arab Emirates, notwithstanding difficulties, have experienced notable economic growth in recent years. In this context, your country has welcomed many hundreds of thousands of foreigners coming to seek work and a more secure financial future for themselves and for their families. They enrich the State not only by their labour but by their very presence, which is an opportunity for a fruitful and positive encounter between the world's great religions, cultures and peoples. The openness of the United Arab Emirates towards those foreign workers requires constant efforts to strengthen the conditions necessary for peaceful coexistence and social progress, and is to be commended. I would like to note here with satisfaction that there are several Catholic churches built on lands donated by the public authorities. It is the Holy See's earnest wish that this cooperation may continue and indeed flourish, according to the growing pastoral necessities of the Catholic population living there. Freedom of worship contributes significantly to the common good and brings social harmony to all those societies where it is practised. I assure you of the desire of the Catholic Christians present in your country to contribute to the well-being of your society, to live God-fearing lives and to respect the dignity of all peoples and religions.

Madam Ambassador, in offering you my best wishes for the success of your mission, I assure you that the various departments of the Roman Curia are ready to provide help and support to you in the fulfilment of your duties. It is the sincere desire of the Holy See to strengthen the relations now happily established between it and the United Arab Emirates. Upon Your Excellency, your family and all the people of the Emirates, I cordially invoke abundant divine blessings.

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\**L'Osservatore Romano* 21.5.2010 p.2.

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