



# The Holy See

---

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS  
FOR THE PRESENTATION OF CREDENCIAL LETTERS  
BY THE AMBASSADORS OF ICELAND, BANGLADESH, SYRIA,  
THE GAMBIA AND KAZAKHSTAN  
ACCREDITED TO THE HOLY SEE**

*Clementine Hall  
Saturday, 13 May 2023*

**[[Multimedia](#)]**

---

*Your Excellencies,*

I offer you a warm welcome and I gladly receive the Letters accrediting you as Ambassadors Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of your countries to the Holy See: Iceland, Bangladesh, Syria, The Gambia and Kazakhstan. In conveying my greetings to your respective Heads of State, I kindly ask that you assure them of a remembrance in my prayers as they carry out their service. My thoughts in particular turn to the beloved Syrian people who are still recovering from the recent violent earthquake in the midst of the ongoing suffering caused by armed conflict.

If we take an honest look at the current situation of our world, even a cursory glance could leave us shocked and discouraged. One thinks of the many places in the world such as Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, Lebanon and Jerusalem, which are facing conflict and unrest. Haiti continues to experience a grave social, economic and humanitarian crisis. Then there is, of course, the ongoing war in Ukraine which has led to untold suffering and death. In addition, we see the increasing flow of forced migration, the effects of climate change and a large number of our brothers and sisters around the world who are still living in poverty due to the lack of access to drinking water, food, basic healthcare, education and dignified work. There is, without a doubt, a growing imbalance in the global economic system.

When will we learn from history that the ways of violence, oppression and unbridled ambition to conquer land do not benefit the common good? When will we learn that investing in the wellbeing of people is always better than spending resources on the development of deadly weapons? When will we learn that social, economic and security issues are all interrelated? When will we learn that we are one human family which can only truly thrive when all of its members are respected, cared for and able to make their own unique contributions? Until we come to this realization, we will continue to experience what I have been calling a third world war being fought piecemeal. Perhaps this description seems troubling to our sensibilities, especially due to our contentment over the extraordinary technological and scientific achievements made or our satisfaction with the steps already taken to address social issues and further develop international law. While they are all certainly laudable in their own right, we must never become complacent or indifferent concerning the current situation of the world nor fail to guarantee that all of our brothers and sisters benefit from these achievements and developments.

At the same time, we must also remain optimistic and determined that the human family is capable of successfully facing the challenges of our day. In this regard, we look to the service that you, dear Ambassadors, are called to carry out. As you well know, the Office of Ambassador is an ancient and noble one. It was even incorporated into Christian Scripture by the Apostle Paul when he used the term to describe the followers of Jesus Christ (cf. *2 Cor. 5:20*). Indeed, the positive role of the Ambassador is attested to in every age and in varying types of situations. If you allow me, I would like to share some brief thoughts on why I think that is the case. As a man or woman of dialogue, a bridge builder, an Ambassador can serve as a figure of hope. Hope in the ultimate goodness of humanity. Hope that common ground is possible because we are all part of the human family. Hope that the last word in avoiding conflict or resolving one peacefully is never said. Hope that peace is not an unrealistic dream. While still faithfully serving his or her country of origin, the Ambassador tries to put aside unhelpful emotions and rise above entrenched positions in order to find acceptable solutions. It is certainly not an easy task. The voice of reason and calls for peace often fall on deaf ears. The current situation of the world, however, only further highlights the need for Ambassadors and their colleagues to be champions of dialogue, champions of hope. The Holy See values the important role that you play, as evidenced by its own diplomatic involvement on the bilateral and multilateral levels.

For its part, the Holy See, in conformity with its nature and particular mission, strives to protect the inviolable dignity of each person, promote the common good and foster human fraternity among all peoples. These efforts, which do not include the pursuit of political, commercial or military aims, are carried out through the exercise of a positive neutrality. Far from being an “ethical neutrality”, especially in the face of human suffering, this affords the Holy See a certain standing in the international community that allows it to better assist in the resolution of conflicts and other matters.

In light of these observations, I am confident that there will be many opportunities for you to

collaborate with the Holy See on matters of common concern. In this regard, I can assure you that the Secretariat of State, along with the other Dicasteries and Offices of the Holy See, are more than willing to engage with you in open and honest dialogue as we work together for the betterment of the human family. As you begin this new service, dear Ambassadors, I willingly invoke upon you, your families, your diplomatic collaborators and staff, abundant divine blessings.

\* \* \*

Dear Ambassadors, I must apologize since I read this address thinking that you had the English translation. Unfortunately, the Secretariat did not provide one. I assume responsibility for this and I ask for your pardon. The translation will be sent to you. Thank you!