



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. Mr MOHAMMAD MASJED JAM'EI
NEW AMBASSADOR OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN
TO THE HOLY SEE***

Thursday, 20 June 1991

Your Excellency,

I am pleased to welcome you to the Vatican and to accept the Letters of Credence by which you have been appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Islamic Republic of Iran. You represent a nation with rich historical, cultural and religious traditions, which give moral strength to your people in the task of reconstruction and development. I assure you that I offer prayers for the peace and well-being of your fellow-citizens.

Peace is the summing-up of the aspirations of all men and women of good will. When it is lacking, not only are people subjected to death and destruction, as has recently occurred in the Persian Gulf area; they are also deeply wounded in their unique dignity as human beings. They are hindered in pursuing their development as rational and spiritual beings. Moreover, for believers, peace is a gift of God. It is as it were God's special endowment, since it makes possible the realization of all his other gifts to individuals and to society.

On many occasions I have expressed the Church's commitment to seek a profound and respectful dialogue with the followers of the Muslim faith, in order to increase mutual knowledge and understanding, and thus better serve the cause of harmony and peace. Indeed, as I wrote in the Encyclical "[Centesimus Annus](#)": "I am convinced that the various religions, now and in the future, will have a predominant role in preserving peace and in building a society worthy of man" (John Paul II, [Centesimus Annus](#), 60). The true foundation for reestablishing justice, for achieving and strengthening peace, and for promoting all aspects of human welfare must be a sincere and wide-ranging exchange between Christian and Muslim believers, based on respect for the specific

character of each other's faith. The world needs the unanimous witness of our common convictions regarding the dignity of man, created by God. We must feel the weight of our responsibility, since it is above all to believers that the Creator has entrusted "the work of his hands", including in a special way his creature *par excellence*: man, invested with an inalienable dignity.

It is the defence and promotion of human dignity which the Holy See pursues through its presence in the international community and its bilateral diplomatic relations with many countries. This activity, which has no other aim but to be at the service of the good of the human family, is characterized by a predominant interest in the ethical, moral and humanitarian aspects of relations between the world's peoples. In this perspective I fully share the desire which Your Excellency has expressed for a further strengthening of relations between the Holy See and the Islamic Republic of Iran, in order to ensure increased mutual understanding and co-operation in these areas of fundamental importance.

The grave problems which affect humanity, including poverty and hunger, especially among millions of refugees, the destruction of the earth's material resources, the exploitation of people and groups of people for economic and political purposes, and the suffering inflicted by armed conflict, are signs of a deep imbalance in the human heart. In effect, the world's inability to meet these situations with wise and generous endeavours to resolve them denotes a widespread spiritual crisis. In many ways, the problems themselves, when they are not due to natural calamities, and the lack of an effective response to them are the expression of a spiritual blindness in man's heart. He fails to take account of the Creator's will manifested in the very nature of created reality. He fails to see the image of God in himself and in others, and thus he lacks the motivation and strength to foster the inviolable dignity of every individual and the solidarity needed to care for the vulnerable and weak. A true renewal of spiritual values is required if a more just and peaceful world is to be achieved.

Economic and political factors alone cannot fully explain the radical changes which are now taking place in the structures of many nations, with important consequences for international relations. These changes cannot be adequately understood without taking into account the underlying demand for greater personal responsibility in the pursuit of our human destiny. They speak to us of man's thirst for authentic spiritual freedom. As I wrote in this year's *World Day of Peace Message*: "The rapid changes which have taken place show very clearly that a person may not be treated as a kind of object governed solely by forces outside of his or her control. Rather, the individual person, despite human frailty, has the ability to seek and freely know the good, to recognize and reject evil, to choose truth and to oppose error" (John Paul II, *Message for the World Day of Peace 1991*, I). This freedom of thought, of conscience, and consequently of religion, is an essential foundation of peace, and I renew the hope that the great religions will continue to foster mutual understanding and dialogue on the basis of the many values shared by them, so as to ensure that obstacles to the implementation of that freedom are avoided (Cf. *ibid.* VII). In this way

following the law of conscience and the precepts of one's own religion believers, although they may hold different views on many subjects, will be able to work together to meet the urgent problems facing the human family.

It is in this spirit too that I recall the beloved Christian communities living in your country. While they remain steadfast in their religious convictions, and thus need the means and opportunities to fulfil their religious duties and deepen and strengthen their Christian faith, they are proud citizens of their homeland and wish to do their part in meeting the challenges facing the nation at this time.

As Your Excellency begins your diplomatic mission, I wish you well and assure you of the co-operation of the various departments of the Holy See. I would ask you to convey my greetings to the President, the Government and the people of the Islamic Republic of Iran, upon whom I prayerfully invoke Almighty God's abundant blessings.

*AAS, (1992), p.306-308.

Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II, vol. XIV, 1 pp. 1706-1709.

L'Attività della Santa Sede 1991 pp. 549-551.

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