



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS PAUL VI
TO THE NEW AMBASSADOR OF LEBANON TO THE HOLY SEE****

Friday, 7 October 1977

Mr Ambassador,

We are really very touched by the noble words, full of faith and humanity, that Your Excellency has just spoken on commencing your functions as Ambassador Extraordinary and plenipotentiary of Lebanon to the Holy Sec. You succeeded in conjuring up, in a moving and simple way, the originality of your dear country, its glorious past, its constant aspirations to peace and freedom, the painful ordeals it has just experienced and its still precarious situation, all things that should win for it respect, friendship and support from all the members of the International Community.

Faced with this fine testimony, we wish to express to you our ardent good wishes. And first of all for His Excellency President Elias Sarkis: we entrust to you the duty of thanking him for the sentiments he changed you to convey to us and to express to him our encouragement for his high mission. As for yourself, Mr Ambassador, we wish you a successful accomplishment of your office to the Holy See, and happy contacts with your colleagues of the diplomatic Corps present in Rome.

Over and above to yourself, our cordial good wishes go to the dear Christian communities in Lebanon, however different they may be in their rite, their historical influence or their numerical importance. They have all been rooted for so long in this land which continues in a certain way the Holy Land, they have taken part with such great merit in the history, the culture, and the progress of their country, that they have a natural right to continue to live there, in their place, in justice and peace. Our wishes are extended to all the inhabitants of Lebanon: may they all be able to live and work there in "the tranquility of order" which you called to mind so well, according to a just distribution of rights and duties, in respect of the laws and common good of the Lebanese people, better still, in the friendship which befits fellow citizens and believers.

The ordeal, it is true, has shaken Lebanon violently, and we suffered with you because of the ruins that have disfigured the country and the massacres that have brought sufferings difficult to heal. But, with you, we wish to believe that the vitality, the energy, the resourcefulness, the capacity for understanding and hope which springs from faith, in your fellow-countrymen as a whole, will permit the restoration and the progress that all men of feeling wish you. On our side, we will not be content with good words of compassion and encouragement; we will continue, in union with our brother Patriarchs and Bishops of this country, to carry out a work of persuasion, among the Lebanese, and also among all the parties concerned and even the international authorities, to construct the future in peace. We will help, as far as we can afford, to dress the wounds. We owe you this support in the name of the charity of Our Lord, in the name of faithfulness, in the name of the esteem we have always had for your ideal of common life among the different groups that compose the Lebanese population. But conversely we venture to say that the peoples of the Middle East, the nations as a whole, and, in a special way, the Church, have benefited and will benefit from your example of vitality and solidarity.

Such are the cordial wishes that we express, Mr Ambassador, on receiving you here and on giving you our Blessing at the threshold of your delicate mission. Next Sunday we will propose to the veneration of the faithful of the whole world the blessed Charbel Makhlouf: we will have then a very special thought for Lebanon, where his holiness shone forth with particular brilliance. For the present we beg God to assist and bless all your compatriots and their rulers, and to watch over the destiny of your country.

*ORa n.42 p.4.