



# The Holy See

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**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI  
TO H.E. Mrs. RAFIÂA LIMAM BAOUENDI  
NEW AMBASSADOR OF TUNISIA TO THE HOLY SEE**

Clementine Hall  
Thursday, 18 December 2008

*Madam Ambassador,*

I welcome you with pleasure at the presentation of the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Tunisia to the Holy See. I thank you for your kind words and for the greetings from H.E. Mr Zine Al Abidine Ben Ali, President of the Republic. I would be grateful if you would kindly convey to him my gratitude, as well as my cordial wishes for himself and for the whole of the Tunisian people.

To enable each person and likewise each family to enjoy the well-being necessary for their full development, economic and social progress are essential. I am therefore delighted to learn that in recent years your country has experienced tangible progress in these areas. In the difficult financial situation that the world is undergoing today authentic solidarity must be established, both within each country and between nations, so that the poorest people will not be even further penalized. In fact, economic growth achieved at the expense of human beings, entire populations or social groups, condemning them to indigence, is unacceptable (cf. *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, n. 332).

Economic progress must also go hand in hand with the development of the person's human and spiritual formation. Indeed, human life cannot be reduced to a material dimension. I acknowledge the efforts that Tunisia has made for the education of youth.

In the face of the difficulties and uncertainties of life and sometimes too a certain erosion of reference points that give it meaning, the younger generations need to receive a sound education

to help them confront the rapid transformations of society. Special attention to cultural and religious differences will enable them to be better integrated in a world increasingly marked by the intermingling of cultures and religions, as well as to help in building a more fraternal world with greater solidarity.

Intercultural and interreligious dialogue is indeed an unavoidable necessity in our day if we are to be able to act together for peace and stability in the world and to further authentic respect for the person and for fundamental human rights. Moreover, recognition of the central place of the person and the dignity of each human being, as well as respect for life that is a gift of God, hence sacred, are a common foundation on which to build a more harmonious world that better accepts legitimate differences. The construction of a society in which the dignity of each person is recognized also implies respect for freedom of conscience and freedom of religion for each one, for the expression of authentic religious beliefs is the truest manifestation of human freedom.

Tunisia's location in the Maghreb invites it to play an important international role, particularly in the Mediterranean and in Africa. The establishment of good neighbourly relations between nations cannot fail to contribute to a clearer awareness of our common membership in one human family. International cooperation and exchanges are therefore to be encouraged, not only to guarantee the right to development to all but also to establish an authentic community of brothers and sisters, called to form one large family.

For this reason, beyond the narrow logic of market relations, social life must be based on the solid foundation of common spiritual and ethical values in order to respond to the needs of the common good and to preserve the rights of the weakest.

Madam Ambassador, the Catholic Church expresses her presence in Tunisian society mainly through her educational institutions and also in the health care sector as well as attention to the disabled. It is through her commitments to serving the people, regardless of their origin or religion, that she intends to contribute in her own way to the common good. The respect and kindness shown to these institutions of the Church are a sign of the trust they enjoy on the part of the Authorities and of the population. I can only rejoice in this.

In fact, as you know, the Catholic community in Tunisia which I would be grateful if you would greet warmly on my behalf is linked to an ancient tradition that has marked the cultural and spiritual life of your country. Saints such as Cyprian, Perpetua and Felicity and many others bore witness there to the one God to the point of giving their lives. I therefore ask Catholics, in profound communion with their Bishop, to manifest enthusiastically to those around them, in the image of their Fathers in the faith, the love of God which motivates them to be radiant witnesses of the hope they bear within them.

At the time when you are inaugurating your mission to the Holy See, Madam Ambassador, I offer

you my cordial good wishes for its success so that the harmonious relations between the Holy See and Tunisia may continue to develop, and I assure you that you will always find an attentive welcome with my collaborators.

Upon you, Your Excellency, your family and your collaborators, as well as upon the Authorities and all the inhabitants of Tunisia, I wholeheartedly invoke an abundance of the Almighty's Blessings.

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