



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE AMBASSADOR OF IRAQ TO THE HOLY SEE*

Friday, 27 June 1986

Mr. Ambassador,

I am pleased to welcome you here today and to accept the Letters of Credence accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Iraq to the Holy See. I am grateful for the greetings which you have conveyed from His Excellency President Saddam Hussein, and I would ask you to assure him of my continuing prayers to the Most High God for the well-being of the Iraqi people.

In the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World of the Second Vatican Council, which was promulgated some twenty years ago but whose message remains just as relevant for today, we read that "Peace is more than the absence of war: it cannot be reduced to the maintenance of a balance of power between opposing forces... It is the fruit of that right ordering of things with which the Divine Founder has invested human society and which must be actualized by men as they thirst after ever greater justice".

It is in this light that I renew, Mr Ambassador, my appeal for reconciliation in your region. I do not lose hope that Almighty God will bring all concerned to pursue every possible means for negotiating a true and lasting peace based upon justice and sustained by fraternal love and respect.

Mindful of the sufferings of those caught up in the present hostilities, I wish to assure you of my concern for all your people. In this regard, Cardinal Roger Etchegaray's humanitarian mission to the prisoners of war from both sides in December and January last gave expression to my heartfelt concern for those who in any way are suffering the consequences of war or as a result of it are separated from their home and family. It is my ardent prayer that the world will have an ever increasing aversion to the terrible injustices which necessarily accompany every situation of armed conflict, and that in this way the path of negotiation and dialogue will appear ever more urgent and

appropriate.

On this occasion my thoughts turn also to the members of the Iraqi Catholic community. Together with their Muslim fellow countrymen, the Iraqi Christian devote themselves to working for harmony. Their Christian faith and religious values inspire them to cultivate a spirit of mutual respect, with pride in their national identity and concern for the progress and common good of their country. In this context I wish to say once more that today dialogue between Christians and Muslims is more necessary than ever. The Catholic Church declares that all men and women must respect one another, rise above all discrimination and serve the universal brotherhood. Similarly it is the responsibility of every government to ensure that the equality of all its citizens before the law is never violated for religious reasons, whether openly or covertly.

Mr Ambassador, as you assume your diplomatic functions as the representative of the Republic of Iraq to the Holy See, I assure you of the full co-operation of the Holy See for the successful accomplishment of your mission. I invoke the blessings of Almighty God upon Your Excellency that you may always have the divine assistance in your endeavours and experience fulfilment in your duties and responsibilities on behalf of your Government. May your activities help to bring about the longed-for peace in your region.

*AAS 79 (1987), p. 44-45.

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