



The Holy See

***DISCOURS DU SAINT-PÈRE JEAN-PAUL II
À S.Exc. M, SHERIF FAWAZ SHREF,
NOUVEL AMBASSADEUR DE JORDANIE PRÈS LE SAINT-SIÈGE****

Jeudi 23 mai 1996

Your Excellency,

1. It is with great satisfaction that I receive from your hands the Letters accrediting you to the Apostolic See as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

As I welcome you today, I remember the various visits which His Majesty the King of Jordan and His Royal Highness the Crown Prince have paid me in recent years a sign of their deferential and cordial attention to the specific mission of the Head of the Catholic Church. These meetings have contributed much to preparing, establishing and strengthening our diplomatic relations and further, as you have just recalled to deepening the fraternal bonds between Jordanian Catholics and Muslims.

2. I am delighted at your presence here as the second Ambassador of Jordan, it marks a new step in relations between the Holy See and your country. Thank you for the kind words you have just addressed to me. I am especially touched by the renewed attention His Majesty King Hussein Ibn Talal and the royal family have paid to the Church's message and to her interventions on behalf of human rights. I would be grateful if in return you would convey my respectful greetings to His Majesty, for his person and for his lofty mission in the service of all his compatriots, as well as my best wishes to those who are close to him, to those who are responsible for serving the nation, and to all the people of Jordan.

In this regard, I would like to express my esteem for the Hashemite Kingdom's generosity to the

many refugees it has welcomed in recent years and who are still present on its land. In this area, you are aware of the intense activity of solidarity which Jordanian Catholics, although they are small in number, carry out in order to aid displaced persons, in close co-operation with all of their compatriots. Wherever they may be, members of the Church have service to their country at heart, within its boundaries and in the international community, in addition to the promotion of friendly relations with all their fellow-citizens and participation in its public, economic and cultural life. In this spirit, Jordanian Catholics are eager and concerned to be increasingly involved in public and social life, as well as in sincere intercultural and interreligious dialogue, especially between Muslims and Christians. I therefore take this opportunity, through you, to offer my warm greetings to the Catholic community living in Jordan.

3. In particular I would like to stress the courageous attitude of His Majesty the King and your country's leaders in the Middle East peace process, during the different phases we have known in recent years. The Hashemite Kingdom was concerned to support measures which have encouraged dialogue between the parties involved; these steps have made it possible to reach agreements and to make important progress. It is still to be hoped that the different States and peoples of the region will now achieve normal relations and true coexistence. Indeed, in these sometimes difficult negotiations between Governments, no efforts should be spared to ensure that every human community is recognized and can enjoy the same rights. The different missions which you have personally had to accomplish on behalf of youth in your country make you particularly attentive to the young people throughout the Middle East, who represent the future of their nations. Their aspirations are another reason for us to do everything to guarantee them a future of peace, necessary for their growth, their health and their education, and to give them the hope that they will have a place of their own in tomorrow's society. It is by teaching them the way of dialogue, peace and respect for their brothers and sisters, that they in turn will become the builders of peace and of a more just and harmonious society. In this regard, the Apostolic See is working tirelessly at the side of those labouring for the peace and well-being of peoples.

4. We know that there are still many regional problems; sadly, we have recently seen the return to armed conflicts which have wounded entire civilian populations and could lead one to think that harmony and reconciliation are again receding for some time to come. In this regard, I willingly acknowledge the tireless efforts of your Sovereign and the civil authorities of your country to silence once and for all weapons, which are never a means of dialogue nor a just and equitable way to solve conflicts between individuals and nations. The Jordanian Government's commitment to and support of the international community's actions are a source of hope for political leaders and for the inhabitants of the region, as well as for all people of goodwill.

In the Middle East, we are now at a crossroads. Henceforth a new phase is necessary. In fact, it is important to pass from a peace defined by agreements to a real and effective peace between peoples, and above all, to peace of mind, that is to say, to a sense of harmony, a deep and common desire and to concrete acts, so that peace may at last come to this land so rich in

spiritual traditions and moral values. With the help of the international community, which will not fail to continue its efforts, the different countries in the region are called to be ever more committed to implementing the peace plan, and most particularly, to the specific negotiations on the important and delicate question of the definitive status of Jerusalem, so as to protect the identity of the Holy City. It is equally dear to the three monotheistic religions. Its history, the existence of the holy places and the presence of various spiritual communities give her an undeniably sacred dimension. Jerusalem thus has a special value for the Jewish, Christian and Muslim believers who reside there, as well as for the members of these three religious traditions who live all over the world. I am delighted that it claims the full attention of His Majesty King Hussein, of the Hashemite royal family and of all the people, for, as you have said, this city is the symbol of meeting and peace among all believers.

5. Down the centuries in this area, an essential crossroads between North and South, between East and West, men have acquired a knowledge and competence which is renowned in the political and commercial domain, but they are also keen on developing their personal and community religious life. In this respect, I would like to repeat to you that I appreciate the Royal House's interest in interreligious dialogue and its support for projects which allow for better mutual knowledge among the three monotheistic religions present in the region. Certainly, a better understanding between people of different spiritual sensitivities creates a state of mind which, in promoting freedom of conscience and freedom of religious belief and practice, and an ever greater respect for people and their fundamental dignity, fosters the development of peaceful relations and co-operation between peoples. It is also a moral requirement for all believers to pursue fraternal collaboration, to combine their efforts and to make the necessary sacrifices to «have the satisfaction of building peace together” (Message for World Day of Peace 1992, n. 6; L'Osservatore Romano English edition, 16 December 1991, p. 3). The Holy See, for its part, is confident that the dialogue undertaken will be continued, and that the desire expressed will lead to a just solution of the complex and delicate issues which the Middle East currently faces. We hope, together with the Jordanian authorities, that the day of a definitive peaceful solution is now close at hand.

6. Mr. Ambassador, as your mission as representative of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to the Holy See is beginning, I offer you my best wishes. Because of its strategic position on the borders of Europe and the East, your country has a vocation to link cultures and traditions which have long been estranged. I am sure that with the new responsibilities you are undertaking today, you will make a great contribution to these ties. Our diplomatic relations are already bringing about a mutual trust based on the same moral values and on the meaning of man, beyond the events of history. In your duties, be assured that you will always find among my coworkers attentive support, cordial understanding and the help you require in order to fulfil your new mission.

Your Excellency, I ask the Most High to crown with his blessings you and your loved ones, as well as His Majesty the King, the royal family, the Jordanian people and all their leaders.

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