



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. MR MOHY AL-DHABBI,
AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF YEMEN***

Thursday, 20 May 1999

Mr Ambassador, Welcoming you to the Vatican on the auspicious occasion of the beginning of your mission as the first Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Yemen to the Holy See, I am pleased to accept the Letters of Credence by which you are so appointed. The establishment of full diplomatic relations between us brings a new level of contact which, I am confident, will lead to ever greater understanding, esteem and cooperation. I thank you for the good wishes which you convey from His Excellency President Ali Abdullah Saleh and from the Government and people of your country; I would ask you in turn to assure them of my prayers for the peace and well-being of the Yemeni nation. Your words have shown an awareness that the Holy See's presence in the international community is clearly marked by the religious and spiritual nature of the Catholic Church's mission in the world. The Holy See's activity aims above all at safeguarding and promoting the inalienable dignity of the human person, which can only be ensured through the integral development of the individual and through the progress of all peoples in peace and justice. It is precisely in seeking these all-important objectives that close and cordial relations between the Holy See and those responsible for the well-being of the world's peoples prove to be of mutual benefit and support. Your Excellency has remarked that, while there have been episodes of animosity and even violence between Christians and Muslims, there have also been many occasions when respect, understanding and friendship have characterized the relations between members of these two world religions. Indeed, when lived sincerely in word and action, religious conviction is a sure safeguard of the dignity, brotherhood and freedom of peoples, and is a guiding principle of right conduct for life together in society. In fact, one of the great challenges facing the human family in our day remains precisely this: to learn to live together in peace and for the mutual benefit of all. Sadly, we must recognize the persistence in our world of a polarization whereby certain ethnic and racial groups, certain religious communities, and certain economic and political ideologies seek to impose their point of view on others, to the point of excluding those who do not share their perspective. Needless to say, such conduct entails grave risks for peace, leading as it does to discrimination, injustice, violence and callous disregard of human rights and human dignity. Such situations highlight the importance of interreligious dialogue and cooperation. There is a great need today for Christians and Muslims to work together at all levels — international, national and regional — for the betterment of humanity, and always in the context of man's spiritual nature (cf. [*Message for the 1992 World Day of*](#)

Peace, No. 5). In proclaiming the truth about the transcendent character of man, the Church insists on the fact that man's quest for social and temporal well-being and for the full recognition of his dignity as a human being corresponds to the deep longings of his spiritual nature. Working to promote and defend all human rights, including the fundamental right to worship God according to the dictates of an upright conscience and to profess one's faith publicly, must become ever more the object of interreligious cooperation. This cooperation must also include efforts to eliminate hunger, poverty, ignorance, persecution, discrimination and every kind of slavery inflicted upon the human spirit. Religion is the mainstay of any society's commitment to justice, and joint programmes and initiatives on the part of the world's religions must concretely affirm this. I appreciate Your Excellency's comments regarding the Holy See's activity on behalf of the peace process in the Middle East; that situation continues to be a source of great concern for the Church and is being followed with the utmost attention. Unfortunately, the progress made thus far has been uneven and has not brought hope and security to the peoples of the region. Moreover, when populations are kept indefinitely in a state between war and peace, the risk of tension and violence greatly increases. Nor can the question of the Holy City of Jerusalem, to which each of the three great monotheistic religions looks as part of its spiritual patrimony, remain unresolved. The parties involved need to face these problems with keen awareness of their responsibilities. As I said earlier this year to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See: "Only honest dialogue, a real concern for the good of people and respect for the international order can lead to solutions befitting a region where our religious traditions are rooted. If violence is contagious, peace can be so too, and I am sure that a stable Middle East would contribute effectively to restoring hope to many peoples" (*Address to the Diplomatic Corps*, 11 January 1999, No. 3). Mr Ambassador, the presentation of your Letters of Credence marks a decisive new phase in relations between the Republic of Yemen and the Holy See in our commitment to work for closer ties and greater mutual understanding. As you begin your mission you can be assured of the ready assistance and cooperation of the departments of the Roman Curia. May Almighty God sustain you and may his abundant blessings be upon you and your country.

* *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, vol. XXII, 1 p.1029-1031. *L'Osservatore Romano* 21.5. 1999 p.7. *L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly edition in English* n.22 p.6. © Copyright 1999 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana
