



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE NEW AMBASSADOR
OF THE KINGDOM OF MOROCCO
TO THE HOLY SEE***

Friday, 3 May 2002

Mr Ambassador,

1. I am pleased to welcome you to the Vatican for the presentation of the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of Morocco to the Holy See.

I warmly thank you for conveying to me the courteous message of His Majesty King Mohammed VI. I would be grateful if you would kindly express in return my cordial good wishes for his person, for Her Royal Highness Princess Lalla Salma, and for the prosperity of the Moroccan people.

As you recalled in your address, the already historic relations between the Kingdom of Morocco and the Holy See over the years have been developing harmoniously. I am happy about this and I pray the Almighty to support the efforts of all Moroccans to build a more fraternal and united nation.

2. At the beginning of the third millennium, the difficult and disquieting circumstances of the international situation strongly incite people of good will to reinforce the bonds of mutual confidence and the conviction that they must work together to foster dialogue and peace. As I have often taken the opportunity to recall, especially during the World Day of Prayer at Assisi last 24 January, it is the duty of national leaders and spiritual authorities to be unremitting in their efforts to remove the violence that all too often governs relations between persons and groups. To succeed, they must clearly denounce all false justifications of violence, especially in the name of religion, and continue to keep intact their attachment to dialogue and peace.

3. How is it possible not to recall at this time, as you yourself did, the tragic situation in the Middle East and the anxieties that beset us about the holy places, especially the Holy City of Jerusalem, for all believers of the monotheistic religions, the symbol of the peace that comes from God. The Holy See has made known its deep concern about the recent events; it does not cease to plead for the resumption of negotiations between the opposing parties, doing its utmost to end the armed conflict, which leads to a dead end and removes the vision of hope for the peoples living there. Only a courageous dialogue, motivated by the desire to build a possible future for all the inhabitants and communities who live in this land will be able to restore a just and lasting peace. As I have already said, neither the blind violence of terrorism nor the violence of war can produce a solution. May our constant efforts and the determined commitment of the international community succeed in convincing all parties to return to the negotiating table!

4. In promoting the dialogue which must go forward between the different religions and also between contemporary cultures, Mr Ambassador, your country can play an important role. Its geographical location and its history make it a meeting place and a bridge: on the one hand toward Western Europe and all the countries that border on the Mediterranean basin, already united by a long common history, and on the other, to sub-Saharan Africa, that the movement of immigration brings close to the Magreb. The authorities of your country are constantly called to pay attention to these new realities and to the specific situation of certain peoples, above all, their human dimension. This does not call into question the rich cultural identity of the nation, that is defined by hospitality.

As I wrote in my Message for Peace, "while it is certainly important to be able to appreciate the values of one's own culture, there is also a need to recognize that every culture, as a typically human and historically conditioned reality, necessarily has its limitations. In order to prevent the sense of belonging to one particular culture from turning into isolation, an effective antidote is a serene and unprejudiced knowledge of other cultures" (*Message for World Day of Peace 2001*, n. 7; *ORE*, 20/27 December 2000, p. 10). In this spirit, your country is honoured by a long tradition of religious tolerance and openness, and the faithful of several religions live there in reciprocal respect, without hindrance to their fundamental freedoms, showing that it is possible for believers of different traditions to live in peace on the same soil.

5. Mr Ambassador, permit me to address through you warm greetings to the Catholic community of Morocco and its pastors. I know that Catholics have their place in the life of the country and that they enjoy popular esteem. They desire to work with all their fellow citizens to build a world of justice and peace, at the service and for the development of the human person. They know that by witnessing in this way to the respect that is due to every human person, created in the image of God, they give glory to the Most High! I encourage them to witness more and more to the brotherly love that Christ teaches us, to tell everyone of the unfailing love of God for humanity.

6. At the time when you are beginning your mission to the Holy See, I offer you my best wishes for

its success. Be sure that you will always be welcomed and understood by those who work with me.

Upon you, Your Excellency, and upon your family and on the Moroccan people and their leaders, I wholeheartedly invoke an abundance of Blessings from the Almighty.

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