



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. MR MOHAMMAD JAVAD FARIDZADE
AMBASSADOR OF IRAN TO THE HOLY SEE****

Friday, 29 October 2004

Mr Ambassador, I am pleased to welcome you, your Excellency, on the occasion of the presentation of the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Holy See. Thank you for your kind words. Please be kind enough to express my gratitude to H.E. Mr Seyed Mohammad Khatami, President of the Republic, for the good wishes he has conveyed to me through you. The diplomatic relations that have existed between your Country and the Holy See for 50 years, as the Colloquium held at the Gregorian University at the beginning of the year stressed, testify to the desire for reciprocal knowledge and the common willingness to foster a culture of peace through our exchanges. Mr Ambassador, you referred to your Country's concern at the deterioration of the international situation and the threats that burden humanity at many levels. To achieve a balanced international order, especially in the face of terrorism that seeks to impose its own laws, the will to build a common future guaranteeing peace for all implies that States undertake to set up stable, effective and recognized means, such as the United Nations Organization and the other international organizations. This action to encourage peace also entails courageous action against terrorism and for peace, to build a world in which all may recognize that they are sons and daughters of the same Almighty and Merciful God. Of course, the building of peace presupposes mutual trust, in order to receive the other not as a threat but as a partner, and to accept in addition the constraints and measures for control implied by common commitments, such as treaties and multilateral agreements, in the different areas of international relations that affect the common good of humanity, including respect for the environment, the regulation of the arms trade and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, the protection of children and the rights of minorities. For its part, the Holy See will spare no effort to convince the leaders of States to avoid using violence or force in all circumstances and always to make negotiation prevail as the means to overcome the disagreements and conflicts that can develop between nations, groups and individuals. The commitment in favour of the human being rests for believers on faith in the one God who created man in his image and likeness and has revealed his will to humankind. As for Christians, if this necessary dialogue between persons is to succeed in establishing relations of brotherhood and mutual love between them, it is fundamentally a response to the dialogue that God himself already began with man when he revealed his Word and proposed his Covenant to him. As you emphasized, Mr Ambassador, it is our duty as believers to proclaim to our contemporaries the

fundamental values expressed in religion which, through natural law, guarantee the dignity of every human person, a sign of God's hallmark in the human being, and regulate the relations of men and women with their peers. As I have so often recalled, the Catholic faithful, for their part, seek in all circumstances to witness to their pro-life approach that respects the human being from conception to one's natural end and guarantees the defence of the person's inalienable rights and duties. One of the most important of these fundamental rights is the right to religious freedom, which is an essential aspect of freedom of conscience and is expressed precisely in the transcendent dimension of the person. The Holy See is counting on the support of the Iranian Authorities to allow the faithful of the Catholic Church in Iran, as well as other Christians, the freedom to profess their religion and to encourage the recognition of the juridical character of ecclesiastical institutions, thereby facilitating their work in Iranian society. Indeed, freedom of worship is only one aspect of freedom of religion, which must be the same for all a country's citizens. As I have recalled countless times, "The various Christian confessions, as well as the world's great religions, need to work together to eliminate the social and cultural causes of terrorism. They can do this by teaching the greatness and dignity of the human person, and by spreading a clearer sense of the oneness of the human family" (*Message for World Day of Peace 2002*, n. 12). I am especially delighted at the establishment in your Country of regular meetings for high-level dialogue between Christians and Muslims, under the patronage of the *Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue* and the Shi'ite Authorities of Iran. I have no doubt that this initiative will pave the way to a constant improvement in relations between believers, on the basis of mutual respect and reciprocal trust. Through you, I am happy to be able to greet the Catholic communities of various rites that live in Iran who, together with their Orthodox brethren, have assured the continuity of the Christian presence down the centuries. I hope that the Christians, who have always desired to be on good terms with the Muslims, may further explore the need for dialogue in daily life through the different aspects of the social life they have in common. I would like to recall how important it is, as I see it, that each person have an effective possibility, with respect for the laws of the country, to express his religious beliefs freely, to gather with his brethren to worship God as due, as well as to assure through catechesis the transmission of religious teaching to children and a deeper knowledge of it to young people and adults. I know that the Catholic faithful are attached to their Country and are keen to participate actively in their development in every area of social life. Mr Ambassador, at the time when you are officially beginning your mission to the Apostolic See, I offer you my very best wishes for the noble task that awaits you. Rest assured that you will find here with my collaborators the attentive welcome and cordial understanding that you may need. I cordially invoke upon Your Excellency, your collaborators and your loved ones, as well as upon the entire Iranian People, an abundance of the Almighty's

Blessings.

**L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English* n.46 p.4. © Copyright 2004 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana