



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. Mr MOHAMED-SALAH DEMBRI,
AMBASSADOR OF ALGERIA TO THE HOLY SEE***

Thursday, 24 April 1997

Mr Ambassador,

1. I am pleased to welcome your Excellency to the Vatican on the occasion of the presentation of the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Democratic and Popular Republic of Algeria to the Holy See.

I would be grateful if you would convey to President Liamine Zéroual and to the Algerian people my best wishes for the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation, as I pray to the Most High to grant them the gift of peace so greatly desired.

2. Mr Ambassador, you have stressed the need for respect of the beliefs of each person as well as for individual and collective freedoms, in order to establish a true State of law. To advance on the paths of progress and harmony, it is indeed indispensable to satisfy people's just aspirations, opening future horizons founded on real solidarity between all citizens and on their mutual acceptance of different sensitivities. But the responses to these expectations cannot be limited to purely economic and material dimensions; they must take into account every aspect of human life, especially by permitting the essential spiritual and cultural needs of individuals and society to be legitimately satisfied.

3. I am pleased with what you said about your country's commitment to partake in building a world of greater solidarity and justice. To reach stability and peace between nations, it is necessary today to promote understanding and co-operation. In this perspective, the efforts made by the Mediterranean countries to encourage a better mutual understanding and their peoples' wellbeing

must receive support. Dialogue between believers of different religious traditions must also allow a spiritual openness that favours fruitful collaboration in the service of the local peoples.

4. As we approach the third millennium, the Catholic Church hopes that nations and human communities will set out together “on a true pilgrimage of peace, starting from the concrete situation in which we find ourselves” (*Message for World Day of Peace 1997*; *L’Osservatore Romano* English edition, 18/25 December 1996, p. 3). For too many people violence has become a tragic daily reality. The sufferings it causes appeal to the consciences of all people of goodwill and invite them to constantly seek the path of reconciliation. This path is difficult and strewn with obstacles; yet the culture of violence must give way to the “culture of peace”. Only the sincere will to reach effective reconciliation can enable resistance to be overcome, and the common good to be sought before individual interests.

By your presence here, your country is showing its desire to give an important place to the spiritual and moral values without which a society cannot be built to last. I hope that the long-standing ties between the Apostolic See and Algeria will allow an ever greater understanding that will contribute to harmony between the human communities.

5. Through you, Mr Ambassador, may I address an affectionate greeting to the small Catholic community in your country. In recent months it has several times been struck tragically by blind violence, thus sharing the condition of so many of your compatriots. I hope that the sacrifice of the Bishop of Oran, of the Trappist monks of Notre-Dame-del'Atlas, as well as that of several other men and women religious may be for your country a pledge of hope and faith in a future of justice and mutual respect. I repeat to the Bishops and Catholics of Algeria my encouragement in their generous witness to brotherhood with all the Algerian people. I remain close to them, and I pray God that the moment of reconciliation and peace will come quickly to this land which has suffered so many trials.

6. At the start of your mission, I offer you my best wishes for the noble task that awaits you. I assure you that you will always find an attentive welcome and cordial understanding among my co-workers.

I willingly invoke on Your Excellency and on all the Algerian people, an abundance of the Almighty's blessings.

**L'Osservatore Romano*. Weekly edition in English n. 20 p.7.

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