



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. Mr ABDELOUHAB MAALMI,
AMBASSADOR OF MOROCCO TO THE HOLY SEE***

Saturday, 25 October 1997

Mr Ambassador,

1. I am pleased to welcome Your Excellency to the Vatican on this solemn occasion 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 the greetings you have addressed to me on behalf of His Majesty King Hassan II. In return, I would be grateful if you would kindly express to him my cordial wishes for his person as well as for the happiness and prosperity of the Moroccan people. I pray to the Most High to accompany the efforts of each individual in the work of building a nation of ever greater brotherhood and solidarity.

2. By deciding that his representative to the Holy See will now reside in Rome, His Majesty the King bears witness to the importance he attaches to strengthening the already long-standing ties between the Kingdom of Morocco and the Apostolic See, in order to foster increasingly trustful relations. At a time when violence and intolerance are breaking out in many regions, it is indeed necessary that the leaders of nations as well as spiritual authorities explore ways to help build societies in which all human life is fully respected, and where the person has the first place and is recognized in his full dignity.

3. Mr Ambassador, you have stressed Morocco's long tradition of openness and tolerance. I am pleased to recall here the visit I made to Casablanca over 10 years ago, which allowed me to address Moroccan young people. In your country there are many opportunities for Catholics and Muslims to meet, so that together they may try to improve the quality of their relations, in the hope

that relationships of mutual esteem through reciprocal knowledge between believers will continue to be strengthened; this can only encourage an ever greater collaboration in the service of man and the needs of his development. In fact, as you stressed in your address, Christians and Muslims are called to collaborate in building a world of justice and peace through mutual reflection and recognition of their points of view. In giving the Most High the adoration and obedience which is his due, we must also witness together to the respect that must be paid to every individual, created in God's image.

4. For her part, since the Second Vatican Council the Catholic Church has been more resolutely committed to the paths of fraternal contact and collaboration with all people of goodwill and, in particular, with Muslims. The dialogue we desire among believers must also lead to the guarantee that each community will be able to express its faith freely. Indeed, for the Catholic Church, "respect and dialogue require reciprocity in all spheres, especially in that which concerns basic freedoms, more particularly, religious freedom" (*Address in Casablanca, 19 August 1985*, n. 5; *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, 16 September 1985, p. 7). I am pleased to know that Catholics in Morocco enjoy everyone's esteem and trust, and thus give a clear witness that believers of different religious traditions can live in peace and mutual respect.

5. In your address, Mr Ambassador, you referred to the situation in Jerusalem. In fact, it continues to be an acute source of concern for believers who regard this city as a symbol of the peace which comes from God. I ardently hope that the international community's efforts to find an equitable and satisfactory solution to the delicate problem of the Holy City may at last be happily resolved as we prepare to enter the third millennium of the Christian era. Honest dialogue should allow progress on this path, with respect for justice and the legitimate rights of all the communities involved. It is also necessary that the communities surrounding the Holy Places of the three monotheistic religions be able to live there in harmony and pursue their religious, educational and social activities in full freedom and a spirit of true brotherhood, thus making this unique city the true "City of Peace". I call upon almighty God to grant that this land, so dear to the heart of believers, may at last experience an era of reconciliation between brothers and sisters and of lasting peace.

6. On this happy occasion, I would like, through you, to address my warmest wishes to the Catholic community in Morocco and its pastors. I encourage all its members to be increasingly fervent witnesses among their brothers and sisters to God's boundless love for humanity. As the Church prepares to celebrate the great Jubilee of the Year 2000, I invite them to grow in faith and to live in unity.

7. As your mission to the Holy See officially begins, I offer you my best wishes for its success. You will always find here an attentive welcome and cordial understanding on the part of my coworkers.

I cordially invoke an abundance of Blessings from the Most High upon Your Excellency, upon your family and upon all the Moroccan people and their leaders.

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