



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II TO THE NEW AMBASSADOR OF KUWAIT TO THE HOLY SEE*

Thursday, 25 May 2000

Mr Ambassador,

1. Welcome to the Vatican; it is a pleasure for me to receive Your Excellency for the presentation of the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the State of Kuwait to the Holy See.

Thank you for the greetings you have brought me from His Highness Emir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. Please convey to him and to the Kuwaiti people my sentiments of esteem and best wishes for happiness and prosperity; I pray the Most High to grant that they all may live in brotherhood and solidarity.

2. I am delighted to know that the Catholic community in your country enjoys the right to profess its faith freely. In fact, as I have often had occasion to say, religious freedom constitutes the very heart of human rights. In professing his religion, a person expresses his deepest aspirations and develops what is most profoundly his own: his interiority, the sanctuary of his being upon which no one can encroach. It is therefore indispensable that each person be able to follow his conscience in all circumstances and that no one force him to act against it. Moreover, the right to religious freedom, today recognized by most States, "includes the right to manifest personal beliefs, whether individually or with others, in public or in private" (*Message for the World Day of Peace 1999*, n. 5).

3. Peace in the Middle East, and especially in the Gulf region, is a constant concern of the Holy See. Indeed, recourse to war cannot settle problems between nations. Only the way of peace is worthy of man! There is an urgent need for all the remaining seeds of antagonism to disappear. The disastrous consequences of the wars that have scarred the peoples of your region bring divisions and tensions. To move beyond them, then, it is to be hoped that a rapid solution can be found to the human problems connected with recent conflicts, especially the return of prisoners of war to their families, so that the necessary process of reconciliation can be strengthened among the peoples of the region. I fervently hope that each

nation can see its right to existence and peace respected, and can live with a peaceful and harmonious attitude towards others.

4. I listened with interest, Mr Ambassador, to what you told me about the support your country has given to dialogue between Muslims and Christians. For her part, the Catholic Church is resolutely committed to the path of brotherly encounter between individuals, in order to encourage peace and solidarity between peoples. By growing in mutual knowledge and by being generously committed to promoting essential human values, such as the right to life and to material and spiritual development, believers help to express fully the human being's transcendent dimension and to respond to the legitimate aspirations of individuals and peoples for the good of all humanity. Peaceful coexistence among believers is a form of respect for the plan of God, who wants human beings to form one family and to maintain brotherly relations. Christians and Muslims are called to join forces to take part in a struggle worthy of man, one opposed to the disorder of his passions, to all forms of selfishness, to the attempts to enslave others and to all kinds of hatred and violence, that is, everything that is contrary to peace and reconciliation (cf. *Message for the World Day of Peace 1999*, n. 7).

5. Mr Ambassador, please allow me, through you, to extend a warm greeting to the Catholic community of Kuwait. United with its Bishop, it renders to God the witness of worship that is his due, and its members take part, according to their abilities, in the country's development. I invite all Catholics to live, with renewed ardour among themselves and with everyone else, the new commandment that the Lord Jesus left us. During this year of the Great Jubilee, I encourage them to remain firm in their faith and to live it confidently, putting their hope in the One who never ceases to guide humanity to its true destiny.

6. As you begin 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 sincere understanding from those who assist me.

I cordially invoke an abundance of the Almighty's blessings on you, on His Highness the Emir of the State of Kuwait and upon all Kuwaitis.

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