



# The Holy See

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**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI  
TO HER EXCELLENCY Mrs MARY ANN GLENDON  
NEW AMBASSADOR OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
TO THE HOLY SEE\***

*Friday, 29 February 2008*

*Your Excellency,*

It is a pleasure for me to accept the Letters by which you are accredited Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America and to offer my cordial good wishes as you take up your new responsibilities in the service of your country. I am confident that the knowledge and experience born of your distinguished association with the work of the Holy See will prove beneficial in the fulfillment of your duties and enrich the activity of the diplomatic community to which you now belong. I also thank you for the cordial greetings which you have conveyed to me from President George W. Bush on behalf of the American people, as I look forward to my Pastoral Visit to the United States in April.

From the dawn of the Republic, America has been, as you noted, a nation which values the role of religious belief in ensuring a vibrant and ethically sound democratic order. Your nation's example of uniting people of good will, regardless of race, nationality or creed, in a shared vision and a disciplined pursuit of the common good has encouraged many younger nations in their efforts to create a harmonious, free and just social order. Today this task of reconciling unity and diversity, of forging a common vision and summoning the moral energy to accomplish it, has become an urgent priority for the whole human family, which is increasingly aware of its interdependence and the need for effective solidarity in meeting global challenges and building a future of peace for coming generations.

The experience of the past century, with its heavy toll of war and violence, culminating in the planned extermination of whole peoples, has made it clear that the future of humanity cannot

depend on mere political compromise. Rather, it must be the fruit of a deeper consensus based on the acknowledgment of universal truths grounded in reasoned reflection on the postulates of our common humanity (cf. *Message for the 2008 World Day of Peace*, 13). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, whose sixtieth anniversary we celebrate this year, was the product of a world-wide recognition that a just global order can only be based on the acknowledgment and defense of the inviolable dignity and rights of every man and woman. This recognition, in turn, must motivate every decision affecting the future of the human family and all its members. I am confident that your country, established on the self-evident truth that the Creator has endowed each human being with certain inalienable rights, will continue to find in the principles of the common moral law, enshrined in its founding documents, a sure guide for exercising its leadership within the international community.

The building of a global juridic culture inspired by the highest ideals of justice, solidarity and peace calls for firm commitment, hope and generosity on the part of each new generation (cf. *Spe Salvi*, 25). I appreciate your reference to America's significant efforts to discover creative means of alleviating the grave problems facing so many nations and peoples in our world. The building of a more secure future for the human family means first and foremost working for the integral development of peoples, especially through the provision of adequate health care, the elimination of pandemics like AIDS, broader educational opportunities to young people, the promotion of women and the curbing of the corruption and militarization which divert precious resources from many of our brothers and sisters in the poorer countries. The progress of the human family is threatened not only by the plague of international terrorism, but also by such threats to peace as the quickening pace of the arms race and the continuance of tensions in the Middle East. I take this occasion to express my hope that patient and transparent negotiations will lead to the reduction and elimination of nuclear weapons and that the recent Annapolis Conference will be the first of a series of steps towards lasting peace in the region. The resolution of these and similar problems calls for trust in, and commitment to, the work of international bodies such as the United Nations Organization, which by their nature are capable of fostering genuine dialogue and understanding, reconciling divergent views, and developing multilateral policies and strategies capable of meeting the manifold challenges of our complex and rapidly changing world.

I cannot fail to note with gratitude the importance which the United States has attributed to interreligious and intercultural dialogue as a positive force for peacemaking. The Holy See is convinced of the great spiritual potential represented by such dialogue, particularly with regard to the promotion of nonviolence and the rejection of ideologies which manipulate and disfigure religion for political purposes, and justify violence in the name of God. The American people's historic appreciation of the role of religion in shaping public discourse and in shedding light on the inherent moral dimension of social issues - a role at times contested in the name of a straitened understanding of political life and public discourse - is reflected in the efforts of so many of your fellow-citizens and government leaders to ensure legal protection for God's gift of life from conception to natural death, and the safeguarding of the institution of marriage, acknowledged as

a stable union between a man and a woman, and that of the family.

Madam Ambassador, as you now undertake your high responsibilities in the service of your country, I renew my good wishes for the success of your work. Be assured that you may always count on the offices of the Holy See to assist and support you in the fulfillment of your duties. Upon you and your family, and upon all the beloved American people, I cordially invoke God's blessings of wisdom, strength and peace.

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