



The Holy See

***DISCORSO DI GIOVANNI PAOLO II
A S. E. IL SIG. TAREK ABDUL RAZZAK RAZZOUQUI,
NUOVO AMBASCIATORE DEL KUWAIT PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE***

Giovedì, 24 marzo 1988

Your Excellency,

The noble sentiments you express on this noteworthy occasion have held my whole attention. I thank you most cordially.

1. In the eyes of public opinion, the ceremony of the presentation of the Letter of Credence by an Ambassador to the Holy See may simply appear to be a matter of protocol. In reality it is a meeting between people and, through them, a meeting between the temporal power and the spiritual power; they agree to cooperate within their respective fields for the good of a particular people, and also for the good of other nations, where possible and opportune.

Your Excellency has been chosen and accredited by His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmed Al Sabah, Emir of the State of Kuwait, in order to continue and to perfect the diplomatic relations which the Emirate has established with the Holy See for many years. My ecclesial ministry gives me the joy of welcoming you and wishing you success in your lofty mission as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Kuwait to the Holy See. Your Excellency, let us join in hoping that these diplomatic relations may contribute to maintaining and ensuring the application of the fundamental principles of civilization and humanity – the Catholic religion, for its part, tries to guard these principles carefully.

Let me not forget the sincere and respectful good wishes His Highness the Emir of the State of Kuwait entrusted you to communicate to me, for the glory of the Apostolic See and of my person. I ask Your Excellency to express my heartfelt gratitude to His Highness and my very best wishes for

the peace and prosperity of the Emirate.

2. Your Excellency has stressed the happy relations between Kuwait and the Holy See, based on a common will to promote freedom, peace and justice. Your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Essa Ahmade Al-Hamad, laboured to this end for twelve years. We are grateful to him for his endeavours. And, Excellency, you yourself have only one desire: to maintain and widen this dialogue - loyal, confident and constructive - between your Government on the one hand and the Holy See on the other to forward the interests of humanity, and especially of peace. Peace, founded on the happiness to which every human being of every nation aspires! Peace, which the Holy See seeks to promote with all its strength by carrying out its specific spiritual mission, including the reminder to adhere to the ethical imperative indispensable to the fulfilment of humanitarian or socio-political tasks.

In keeping with the spirit of tolerance and the ideal of peace which do honour to your Government, you will understand how important it is to me to remember the Catholic community present in the Emirate who are in the care of Bishop Francis Micallef, Vicar Apostolic. These children of the Catholic Church are a minority and, come from foreign lands: mostly from the Middle East, but some are from the West and from the South of Asia. It is certainly their duty to respect the legislation of the country which hosts them and permits them to take part in the economic activity of the Emirate. Thus, the Government of Kuwait, like any other State which hosts foreigners, should respect and protect these workers and their moral and religious options. In my last Message on the World Day of Peace, celebrated on 1 January, I made a point of mentioning religious freedom, since it is a condition for peaceful coexistence. A delicate aspect of this fundamental question was thus formulated: «Even when a State gives a particular religion a special juridical place, it must, in practice, legally recognize and respect the right to the freedom of conscience of all its citizens, as well as of those foreigners who reside on its territory, even temporarily, whether for professional or other reasons» (n. 1). Your Government should be esteemed for its benevolent attitude towards the Catholic community which is dispersed in small communities throughout Kuwait.

These families or individuals need a place of worship, which is fairly close to their domicile and to their place of work; equally they need to feel at liberty to attend it. The foreign Catholic families who have children of school age hope to give them the humane and religious education of their choice. In order to answer their needs, it is only right that Catholic schools conduct their educational activity freely. Next, I think of those priests who assist Bishop Micallef, the Vicar Apostolic, in his spiritual work for the faithful. They count upon the open-mindedness of the Government and express appreciation of its understanding when it facilitates their movements and permits them to receive the didactic material necessary for their educational work and religious worship. In all this, although briefly, we touch upon the serious and delicate problem of absolute respect for the conscience of the believer.

3. Lastly, I am grateful to Your Excellency for having described the efforts of your Government to contribute, through the means at its disposal and in particular by diplomacy, to the solution of the difficult conflicts which are inherent in your region and in the world, wherever peace is menaced or has been broken. If your country has not succeeded in achieving all it would wish for as regards peace, it nevertheless possesses considerable influence. I am happy to have the opportunity to encourage your Government to distinguish itself through its perseverance and willingness to promote the spirit of dialogue and negotiation, by which road alone true peace may be reached. Your Excellency, rest assured that, in accord with your own wishes, you will always find here a ready ear and the support which may be useful to your mission and your efforts to further peace and brotherhood, for the good of mankind.

At the close of this meeting, I express my cordial wishes for the success of your lofty mission, which opens today. May you receive abundant satisfaction on the diplomatic level, but may you also discover anew the Catholic Church, her history, ancient and modern, her diplomacy and active service to the contemporary world. To Almighty God I entrust you, those who are dear to you, and the Emirate of Kuwait, which you have the honour to represent in your capacity as Ambassador to the Holy See.

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