



The Holy See

***DISCORSO DI GIOVANNI PAOLO II
A S.E. IL SIGNOR ISMAIL MOBARAK,
NUOVO AMBASCIATORE DELLA REPUBBLICA ARABA D'EGITTO PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE****

Lunedì, 28 novembre 1988

Mr. Ambassador,

I am happy to welcome you cordially and to receive the Letters which accredit you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Arab Republic of Egypt. I thank you sincerely for having conveyed to me the courteous greeting and the good wishes of President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak and I ask you to assure him of my sentiments of esteem and regard, as well as of the grateful memory which I retain of our meeting last February. The noble expressions which Your Excellency has addressed to me witness to the spirit in which you intend to carry out the high mission to which you are called.

I desire to underline with deep appreciation what you said regarding the common will of your fellow citizens, Christians and Muslims, to cooperate in the building of a society ever more united and fraternal in the harmonious and peaceful living together of all its members. Indeed, only understanding and mutual respect, together with the attachment of all to the highest religious traditions, to culture and to national identity, favour the attainment of the spiritual and material well-being which constitutes the objective of every society.

There is no doubt that the historical presence in Egypt of various religious communities, sharing a common faith in one God, constitutes in itself a great richness. Each one of these communities, in fact, has the feeling of being an integral part of the nation and is called to offer its effective and positive contribution to the national life, while promoting the values that constitute its foundation; the first of these being respect for the freedom and dignity of every individual. We are dealing here, moreover, with values which transcend the very borders of the country; for this reason, they

should encourage all to seek collaboration, tolerance, and mutual respect in the area of the international community.

In this regard, there is great significance in the reference you made to the tireless and praise-worthy engagement of Egypt in defence of peace, stability, and respect for the legitimate rights of peoples, particularly in a number of situations of prolonged and painful conflict.

Mr Ambassador, referring to the activity of the Holy See, you have wished to bring out the great themes of peace, justice, the fundamental rights of man, solidarity and co-responsibility among peoples. I am sincerely grateful to you for having recalled the particular interest and the constant involvement of the Holy See in these matters. To be sure, its mission is essentially spiritual and pastoral, directed in the first place to the Catholic communities. Nevertheless, and to the same extent, she directs her concern towards all believers in God and towards the whole of humanity. In fact, we all come from God and are called by him to seek to fulfil his will in the building of a world which – as I said in 1985 at Casablanca, where I met young people of Muslim faith – should be human, pluralistic and responsible: that is, a world in which the fundamental rule is respect, love and assistance for every human being as God's creature.

Mr Ambassador, the high mission which you are taking on today will allow you to be a direct witness of the Catholic Church, which, in accordance with her nature and means, endeavours ceaselessly to proclaim faith in God and the Gospel of Christ, to enunciate the fundamental moral values, to promote dialogue as the only way to overcome conflicts, to defend religious liberty as an indispensable condition for the progress of society and foundation of peace among peoples.

You, Mr Ambassador, have expressed the hope for a just and lasting peace for the Middle East: this is a hope, I would say an appeal, with which I identify with all my heart. I hope that the good will and commitment of all will prevail as soon as possible, and, as you emphasized, that peace will be able to be found again in a spirit of justice and in the recognition of the legitimate rights of all the peoples of the region.

These wishes make our thoughts turn spontaneously towards the Holy Land and, above all, towards the Holy City, Jerusalem, a unique place which contains historical and religious memories for Jews, Christians and Muslims. How could one fail to recall that unfortunately that region has been for too many years a scene of unspeakable suffering for so many persons?

You also mentioned Lebanon, on behalf of which the Holy See has so many times called for a peaceful equitable and dignified solution to the present situation. It is not just, in fact, that a country so rich in religious and cultural traditions having suffered so long and severely, should now inexplicably lack any prospect for unity and for reconciliation. The Lebanese people should be assured of the possibility and the necessary help to save their country.

To these deeply-felt wishes, I would like to join respectful and cordial wishes for yourself, Mr. Ambassador, and for a fruitful fulfilment of your mission, in the course of which I am certain that you will find the most sincere and effective collaboration on the part of the Departments of the Holy See.

I cordially invoke the most abundant blessings of the almighty and merciful God on you, your family, your collaborators as well as on all the dear people of Egypt and its leaders.

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