



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. MR ADNAN BAHJAT AL TALHOUNI
NEW AMBASSADOR OF THE HASHEMITE KINGDOM OF JORDAN
TO THE HOLY SEE***

28 May 1998

Mr Ambassador, I am pleased to welcome you today and to accept the Letters of Credence by which His Majesty King Hussein Bin Talal appoints you Ambassador of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to the Holy See. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between us, you are the third in a distinguished line of Ambassadors who have worked effectively to strengthen the ties uniting us. I extend to you my good wishes for the success of your mission. I thank you for the greetings which you bring from King Hussein, and I ask you to convey to His Majesty my own greetings and to assure him of my prayers for the peace and prosperity of the nation. Inevitably, the peace and prosperity of Jordan are closely tied to the situation in the Middle East as a whole. In recent years, hopes have been raised that negotiations would produce peaceful solutions to the many problems of the region. But these hopes have not yet been fulfilled. Indeed in times such as the present the prospect of fulfilment even seems to have receded. It is clear that there will be no peace unless there is the will to pursue the path of dialogue and understanding which alone can lead to peace. When this determination is not present on all sides, frustration and anger take hold, which in turn lead to violence. I pay tribute to your country and to His Majesty the King, for Jordan has demonstrated a strong will to pursue the way of dialogue and understanding, to work patiently and courageously for peace. The most recent negotiations suggest that, with the prospect of a breakdown in the peace process which would surely prove disastrous for all, there is still determination to find non-violent solutions. It is my fervent hope that the voice of reason will prevail. I repeat once again that there is only one path that can be taken - that of respect, justice and cooperation. History has repeatedly shown that the rejection of dialogue in favour of aggression is a decision which creates many more problems than it solves; thus, it is not a reasonable option. The only reasonable option, in the Middle East as elsewhere, remains that of dialogue and understanding. In the current complex and difficult situation, the Church seeks to make her distinctive contribution, not in favour of one people or another but in favour of peace, and therefore in favour of all the peoples of the region. In this, the Church is motivated not by narrow institutional self-interest nor by political calculation, but by a profound respect for all the peoples of the Middle East and by the solemn duty which the Gospel imposes. It is the Gospel rather than any ideology which enables the Church to see the truth about the human person and human society, a truth easily obscured when pressures are so great and complexities so daunting. In such a situation, the Church seeks to speak a word of truth

about the human person and human society, since without that truth any agreement which might be negotiated would be illusory. It would lack the one sure foundation upon which a just and lasting peace may be built. The Church is inspired by a moral vision, born of faith, it is true, but reaching beyond the circle of Christian faith to be shared by all people committed to the common good. It is a moral vision which Jews, Christians and Moslems can share, since all three are born of a tradition of ethical monotheism. We are all children of a religious tradition which insists that man cannot worship the one true God without respecting the moral imperative which has its roots in God. Such a vision understands that a peace process which ignores justice will descend sooner or later into short-sighted pragmatism, self-interest or opportunism. In fact, there can be no peace without justice. All the peoples of the Middle East have in some way been wronged, and all have inalienable rights. Justice demands that wrongs be redressed and rights be respected. But neither will there be justice without truth. To see the necessary relationship between peace, justice and truth is to understand the moral structure of peace. It is this above all which any peace process must respect; and it is at this point that the Church pledges to cooperate in every way possible. The history of the Middle East shows how religion, when linked to ideology, can divide and lead even to violent conflict. Yet it is equally clear that, when religion is allowed to be what it truly is, then it can unite, enabling believers to walk together in trust and mutual respect. With its enlightened Constitution and the initiatives in favour of interreligious dialogue taken by His Majesty the King and by Crown Prince Hassan, the Kingdom of Jordan has indicated that such a way forward is possible. It is my hope that Christians in your country will continue to participate in all sectors of social life and in public institutions. But also beyond the borders of Jordan, it is vital now that Jews, Christians and Moslems should find that common path which leads to a strengthening of mutual respect, understanding and cooperation. In reflecting upon peace, my thoughts turn inevitably to the Holy City, so often destroyed yet always rebuilt, its stones a symbol of both human desolation and the power of human hope. The long and troubled history of Jerusalem will reach a new threshold in the year 2000 as the Third Millennium of Christianity dawns. It is my fervent hope that this may prompt formal recognition with international guarantees of the unique and sacred character of the Holy City. Indeed, it is we who belong to Jerusalem, since we are all her children; and if this is true, then the City ought to become a place where all peoples of the world can meet in peace. The Holy City has always had a special place in Jordanian history and in the heart of the Jordanian people. Mr Ambassador, I trust most sincerely that the bonds of friendship and understanding between the Kingdom of Jordan and the Holy See will be strengthened by your time of service in Rome, so that we may collaborate ever more effectively in the search for peace. I assure you of the ready assistance of the various offices and agencies of the Holy See as you perform your duties. Upon yourself, your family and your beloved country I invoke the abundant blessings of Almighty

God.

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