



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. MR MOHAMAD JAHAM ABDULAZIZ AL-KAWARI,
AMBASSADOR OF QATAR***

Friday, 12 December 2003

Mr Ambassador, I am pleased to greet you, Your Excellency, on the occasion of the presentation of the Letters accrediting you as the first Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the State of Qatar to the Holy See, and I thank you for your kind words. I would be grateful, Mr Ambassador, if you would express to His Highness the Emir of Qatar, Sheik Hamad ben Khalifa Al-Thani, as well as to His Highness the Crown Prince, Sheikh Tamim ben Hamad ben Khalifa Al-Thani, my thanks for the courteous greetings they have conveyed to me through you. Please reciprocate them with my cordial good wishes for the happiness and peace of all the Country's inhabitants. Mr Ambassador, your young Country, located in a part of the world considered from many points of view as strategic, is eager to take its place in the concert of nations, opening to regional and international exchanges and participating in international life in various ways. Convinced of the interest and fruitfulness of the meeting between cultures and religions, it is striving to encourage dialogue as a means to resolve the tensions among peoples and to progress towards a better understanding for the good of all. As you know, this is also a constant concern of the Holy See. It encourages nations to do all they can to solve the many serious problems that overshadow international life today and to defuse the risk of clashes, keeping up a courageous and unflagging dialogue that respects all the parties concerned. In this way the conditions of a solid, lasting peace will be truly guaranteed. Globalization, which is a feature of our time, must not be understood merely as an economic phenomenon, marked by the ever closer interdependence of financial and commercial exchanges, nor as a wonderful acceleration of communication between human beings thanks to the considerable technological advances. More fundamentally, it expresses the acquisition of an awareness that "there are values which are common to all cultures because they are rooted in the nature of the person. These values express humanity's most authentic and distinctive features" (*Message for World Day of Peace*, 1 January 2001, n. 16). The gratitude of our common belonging to the same world and the same human family must transform relations between individuals and peoples, so that the common good is always respected and violent, murderous confrontations between people cease; for all are brothers and sisters created for the glory of the one God. For the Catholic Church, religious freedom is one of the most fundamental human rights because it expresses, precisely, the inviolable dignity of every person in his noblest dimension, that is, his relationship to the Creator, and because it belongs to freedom of conscience. For this reason the Holy See does all in its power to

appeal for the necessary respect of this right that applies to all believers of all religions. I am truly delighted to know that the State of Qatar recognizes freedom of worship for all believers and I appreciate your Government's welcoming attitude to Christians, especially members of the Catholic Church. I warmly thank those who have been involved in this area. I know that, for their part, the Catholic faithful apply themselves to working wholeheartedly for the good of the Country in which they live, with respect for its laws and traditions and concern for the dialogue of life with everyone, especially Muslims. The hoped-for dialogue between nations must enable violence to be overcome and pave the way to the conditions of true peace. Interreligious dialogue is also an indispensable requirement. On this topic, I hail the attention that your Country's Authorities devote to actively promoting dialogue between Christians and Muslims. I am convinced, for my part, that "the various Christian confessions, as well as the world's great religions, need to work together to eliminate the social and cultural causes of terrorism. They can do this by teaching the greatness and dignity of the human person and by spreading a clearer sense of the oneness of the human family. This is a specific area of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue and cooperation, a pressing service which religion can offer to world peace" (*Message for World Day of Peace*, 1 January 2002, n. 12). I am grateful to you, Mr Ambassador, for mentioning the dramatic situation in the Holy Land and your ardent wish to see the end of this conflict in the near future. The Holy See shares constantly in this concern and never misses an opportunity to remind the international community of its duty to work hard with the parties involved so that they will engage in real negotiations. It also invites the Authorities and people present to take every possible opportunity to envisage a future of peace and brotherhood. Indeed, there will be no true peace in this region except through the renunciation of reciprocal violence and recourse to a courageous dialogue that can lead to the recognition of the right of each one to live freely in his land with respect for justice and safety for all, especially in the vicinity of the Holy Places. May the longed-for day arrive when this land, so dear to all the children of Abraham, will see peace restored! May I be permitted through you to address a warm greeting to the Catholic community that lives in Qatar, as well as to all the Christian faithful of other denominations. May they have at heart to behave as true disciples of Christ, putting into practice the twofold commandment of love for God and for one's neighbour! May I also extend my fervent good wishes to all the inhabitants of your noble Land. At the time when you are beginning your noble mission, Your Excellency, I assure you of the attentive availability of all my collaborators and I offer you my very best wishes for success in your work, so that harmonious relations may develop between the Holy See and the State of Qatar. Upon you, Your Excellency, your family, your collaborators and all your compatriots, I invoke an abundance of Blessings from the Most

High.

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