



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. MR ABDULHAFED GADDUR,
NEW CHIEF OF MISSION OF THE SOCIALIST PEOPLE'S
LIBYAN ARAB JAMAHIRIYA TO THE HOLY SEE***

Tuesday, 1 July 2003

Mr Chief of Mission, At the solemn moment in which you are presenting to me the Letters that accredit you as Representative of the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya to the Holy See, I would like to offer you a cordial welcome. I thank you for your courteous words and I am pleased to reciprocate, through you, the kind greeting which H.E. Mr Moammar El Gheddafi, Leader of the Libyan Revolution, has conveyed to me, at the same time recalling the common commitment of the Holy See and of his country with regard to the understanding between States, the reinforcement of dialogue in the international arena, and the safeguard of the principles of tolerance among peoples and the pursuit of peace and justice. Please convey to the Government you represent my sentiments of respect and consideration for the various projects it is carrying out to consolidate processes of reciprocal respect and collaboration in the assembly of nations, in the framework of international law. I likewise offer the assurance of my constant affection to the beloved people of Libya, and my prayers for their serene progress in well-being and in the full achievement of every high human and spiritual ideal. The action of the Holy See in the context of subjects of international law is marked by its persevering search for a sincere dialogue which emphasizes what unites rather than what divides, so as to foster understanding between nations, the achievement of peace and justice, the defence of each people's distinctive, legitimate features and concrete solidarity with the less fortunate. The method of courageous and persevering dialogue has proven particularly effective in alleviating the many tensions existing in the world which give rise to concern and, to be overcome, require the effective cooperation of all with a vivid awareness of the fundamental principles of truth, justice, love and freedom. I am thinking of the situation in the Middle East that I have very much at heart; of terrorism which, since it can strike anywhere indiscriminately, threatens cities, peoples and even all humanity; of the conflicts which prevent the peoples of many African regions from taking care of their own development; of the unequal distribution of the goods of the earth and the fruits of technological, human and spiritual research. Dialogue, based on solid moral laws, helps contentents find solutions and fosters respect for life, for every human life. Here I would like to recall the enlightening words that my venerable Predecessor, Blessed Pope John XXIII, wrote precisely 40 years ago in his Encyclical *Pacem in Terris*: "Any well-regulated and productive association of men in society demands the acceptance of one fundamental principle: that

each individual is truly a person. His is a nature that is endowed with intelligence and free will. As such he has rights and duties, which together flow as a direct consequence from his nature. These rights and duties are universal and inviolable, and therefore altogether inalienable" (n. 9). This is why recourse to weapons to settle controversies is always a sign of the defeat of reason and of humanity. The Church, conscious of the role of religion in awakening and fostering the culture of encounter, of reciprocal understanding and effective collaboration, wants to pursue her mission of peace and urges everyone to assume responsibility for each other in order to build a world that is more just, more solidary and free (cf. *Message for World Day of Peace 2003*, n. 9; *ORE*, 18/25 December 2002, p. 4). This witness is also offered by the small and active Catholic community that lives in Libya. Despite its scant resources it puts itself, in Christ's name, at the service of the human being, of all human beings, for it recognizes in every human being the face of God, to be welcomed, loved and served. It is this truth that inspires consecrated persons who are dedicated to various humanitarian activities or social assistance. The Catholic Church in Libya wishes to continue her action, fostering the spirit of fraternal communion and availability to her neighbour with a discreet and loving presence. I should like to request you, Mr Chief of Mission, to convey my gratitude to the Libyan Authorities and to the entire people for the esteem and consideration with which they surround the Church's mission and work. This esteem is reciprocal. The sincere desire for honest collaboration constitutes the basis of fruitful cooperation among believers and between all peoples. This is particularly true for followers of Islam and for Christians. In the face of certain attempts to distort religion and abuse sacred traditions, it is necessary to reassert forcefully that practices which incite people to violence and contempt of human life are contrary to God and man. The path of dialogue and mutual understanding with respect for differences should be encouraged so that true peace may be pursued and the meeting between different peoples may take place in a context of solidarity and understanding. As I willingly accept the documents accrediting you as Chief of Mission of the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya to the Holy See, please accept my fervent good wishes for the important task that has been entrusted to you. In fulfilling your mission, you will be able to count on my constant attention as well as on the competent and disinterested help of those who work with me.

I accompany these wishes with the invocation of an abundance of divine blessings upon you and your collaborators, upon the people of Libya and their

leaders.

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