



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE NEW AMBASSADOR OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN
TO THE HOLY SEE***

Thursday 16 October 1986

Your Excellency,

I welcome you today to the Vatican for the presentation of the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Holy See. I thank you for the greetings you have expressed from your President, His Excellency the Hojjat ol eslam Sayyed 'Ali Khamene'i, and I would ask you to convey to him the assurance of my prayers to the Most High God for all the people of your country.

You have rightly pointed out that in various areas of the world armed conflicts are causing untold misery, suffering and loss of human life. Some of these conflicts are of recent origin, while others are the outcome of long-standing and even traditional divisions between peoples. I wish to assure you that I am deeply afflicted by the sufferings of the people of Iran in the present state of war in your region.

In the increasingly interdependent world in which we live, no armed conflict is a purely local matter. It inevitably has repercussions internationally and increases the tensions and divergencies between groups of nations and between blocs. For this very reason the eyes of the world are directed with profound concern to the sad conflict which has been going on in your region for almost a decade.

It is undoubtedly true that the disturbances which so frequently occur in the social order and between nations result in part from the tensions of economic, political and social forms. But – as is clear within the religious viewpoint which characterises our outlook – at a deeper level they flow from man's pride and selfishness, which contaminate even the social and political spheres. This is

a cause of great sorrow to those who understand that God's will for man is that he should live in peace and brotherhood with everyone, building a world in which justice and mercy may flourish and in which the priceless treasure of human life will be everywhere respected and defended.

Indeed true religious conviction leads to a great reverence for man, for every human being. It teaches that the common good of men is in its basic sense determined by God's eternal law. In this sense, religious faith shows forth the evils that accompany the outbreak and the continuation of armed conflicts between peoples. At the same time, faith in Almighty God's universal providence opens our hearts to the well-founded hope that peace will at last take root in all the peoples of the world. It is my ardent prayer that in your region true peace with justice will soon be restored.

With regard to some of the matters which Your Excellency raised, I would recall the position of the Catholic Church as it was authoritatively formulated by the Second Vatican Council in relation to the conduct of war. "Quite a large number of nations have subscribed to various international agreements aimed at making military acuity and its consequences less inhuman. Such are conventions concerning the handling of wounded or captured soldiers, and various similar agreements. Agreements of this sort must be honoured. Indeed they should be improved upon so that they can better and more workable lead to restraining the frightfulness of war". As Your Excellency is aware, on many occasions I have not failed to draw attention to and to stress these principles, and I have expressed a severe judgement when it has appeared that they had not been respected.

The Holy See hopes that the conscience of the entire human family will more willingly uphold the instruments for responding to the causes of conflict through peaceful means. Dialogue and negotiation remain the best channels for solving contentions between nations and peoples. Where injustices exist or have occurred, they can only be truly overcome where sentiments of peace are wholeheartedly accepted.

Your Excellency, I express the hope that your mission as the worthy diplomatic representative of your country to the Holy See will give you much personal satisfaction and will contribute to making relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Holy See fruitful and productive in the cause of peace.

I am also confident of the understanding and collaboration of Your Excellency and of the Authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran in regard to the situation of the Christian communities in your country.

You readily understand that the religious life of those communities requires the presence and work of a sufficient number of priests and consecrated persons, many of them generously sent by the Churches in other countries.

I am certain that the happy solution of certain disturbing episodes of recent date will not only contribute to the good progress of relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Holy See, but will also lead to a growth of neighbourliness and co-operation between Muslims and Catholics throughout the world.

I invoke Almighty God's abundant blessings upon you and upon your fellow-citizens.

*AAS 79 (1987) p. 535-537. *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, vol. IX, 2 pp. 1045-1047. *L'Attività della Santa Sede* 1986 pp. 779-781. *L'Osservatore Romano* 17.10.1986 p.4. *L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English* n.45 p.21. ©
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