



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

TO H.E. Mr MUTASIM ISMAIL BILBEISI, NEW AMBASSADOR

OF THE HASHEMITE KINGDOM OF JORDAN TO THE HOLY SEE* Saturday, 19 November 1994 Mr.

*Ambassador,*Your presence here today marks a significant step forward in relations between the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Holy See. I am particularly happy to accept the Letters of Credence by which His Majesty King Hussein Bin Talal has appointed you Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, the first after the formal establishment of diplomatic relations between us. I would ask you kindly to assure His Majesty and the Government of the deep satisfaction which this moment brings me.As Your Excellency has already indicated, even before the establishment of diplomatic relations contacts between the Hashemite Kingdom and the Holy See were close and cordial. It is enough to recall the many visits to the Vatican of His Majesty and of Crown Prince Hassan, occasions always marked by warmth and mutual esteem, no less than by a shared desire to co-operate in the promotion of the fundamental human values of freedom, justice, peace and harmony. There is a need in every part of the world for men and women of good will and courage who will be true builders of peace. This is particularly evident in the Middle East where, after years of conflict, essential steps along the path of a settlement are now being taken. I cannot but express admiration and appreciation of the decisions taken by His Majesty the King, decisions which have not always been easy but which have finally brought peace with the neighbouring State of Israel. I express the ardent hope that what has been courageously agreed between the Jordanian and Israeli Authorities will soon be put into practice for the good of both countries and of their respective citizens. Peace and co-operation will bring well-being and social stability, and will therefore also be an incentive and example in other relationships which are still marked by mistrust, discrimination and tension. The peace process still has a long and arduous path to follow, and it is not simplistic to say that its success depends, more than on anything else, on an increase of trust between the peoples of the Middle East themselves. This trust is being fostered and sustained by the wisdom and courage of the leaders of the region, and in this I gladly express recognition of the important role played by His Majesty the King. Peace is a universal value which must be pursued in every part of the world, among all peoples. How much more so in that unique region which holds such a special place in the hearts of Muslims, Jews and Christians alike! The region in which God revealed himself to man constitutes for the believers of the great monotheistic religions a necessary point of reference for their religious and cultural identities. In a certain sense the difficulties of the peace process are epitomized in the contrasting approaches to the question of the Holy City of Jerusalem. Precisely because the Holy City constitutes a sacred heritage for Jews, Christians and Muslims alike, its very stones and monuments are both a promise of peace and a symbol of our differences. The Holy See's position on the question is well known. As regards that part of the City considered sacred, it asks for international guarantees for the preservation of the characteristics which make it unique in the world: the Holy Places, the life of its communities, their respective quarters and, naturally, free access for all believers. Many religious men and women share the hope of being able one day soon

to meet the followers of the other religions in a spirit of understanding and co-operation, in order to pray together in Jerusalem, which will then truly be the City of Peace. As Your Excellency has mentioned, Jerusalem is very dear to His Majesty King Hussein and to the Hashemite Royal Family. The Holy See is greatly encouraged by the interest and commitment constantly demonstrated by the Jordanian Authorities in fostering mutual knowledge, dialogue and co-operation among the followers of the three religions. Certainly, our newly-established diplomatic relations and the exchange of Ambassadors between us will favour this intention, just as it has already brought encouragement to the Catholic citizens of Jordan who are ever ready to work for the advancement of the national community in every sphere. Clearly, our diplomatic relations are not and cannot remain solely a bilateral question. They are meant to support and increase the level of dialogue in the entire region. Mr. Ambassador, I offer you my warm good wishes for the success of your mission. The various departments of the Holy See will only be too ready to welcome and assist you. In renewing the expression of my esteem for His Majesty the King, the Royal Family and the People of Jordan, I invoke Almighty God's abundant blessings upon the entire

Nation.

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