



# The Holy See

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**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II  
TO H. E. Mr MOHAMED HUSEIN SAID ELSADR,  
NEW AMBASSADOR OF THE ARAB REPUBLIC OF EGYPT  
TO THE HOLY SEE\***

*Friday, 4 October 1996*

*Mr Ambassador,*

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the Vatican today and to accept the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the Holy See. I am very grateful for the good wishes which you have brought from His Excellency President Mubarak; our meeting of two years ago is still vividly etched on my memory. Please convey to His Excellency my own cordial greetings. Assure him of my profound respect for the Egyptian people and of my prayers for the progress, peace and prosperity of your country.

I very much appreciate your kind remarks regarding the Holy See's efforts to promote the advancement of peace in the world. In her service of the cause of peace, the Church has a role which is distinct from that of civil authority. This distinctiveness, while precluding any identification of the Church with the political community, in no way lessens the urgency with which she seeks to serve the good of all people, individually and as members of society (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 76). Precisely by reason of her close attention to transcendent matters, the Church is able to be present in the temporal order by educating consciences to the truths and values fundamental to society's well-being. She strongly proclaims the truth of human dignity and works to strengthen the harmony and solidarity which can lead to effective action in favour of the common good. While her mission is primarily spiritual and religious, with her efforts directed in the first place to the Catholic faithful, the Church remains firmly committed to working for the integral good of the whole human family. She willingly lends her support, moral and material, to all men and women of goodwill who actively oppose those things which imperil the moral health of nations and peoples, or which

threaten the peace which should reign between them.

The Holy See affirms and unequivocally espouses the position that authentic religion rejects all forms of violence and extremism, in accordance with what His Excellency President Mubarak asserted on the occasion of the Eighth Conference of the Higher Council for Islamic Affairs held in Cairo last July. In fact, it is of the very nature of religion to promote an increasingly respectful relationship between individuals, peoples and nations. For this reason, I have written that "it would be a mistake if religions or groups of their followers, in the interpretation and practice of their respective beliefs, were to fall into forms of fundamentalism and fanaticism, justifying struggles and conflicts with others by adducing religious motives. If there exists a struggle worthy of man, it is the struggle against his own disordered passions, against every kind of selfishness, against attempts to oppress others, against every type of hatred and violence: in short, against every thing that is the exact opposite of peace and reconciliation" (John Paul II, *Message for the World Day of Prayer for Peace 1992*, 7 [8 Dec. 1991]).

Your Excellency's reference to the conflict and strife which have often been the historical scourge of your region reminds us of the present situation in the Middle East. I warmly commend Egypt's efforts to help bring peace and stability to an area still beset by tension and violence. Much has been accomplished in the past few years, and yet many basic questions of justice and the recognition of the legitimate rights of the peoples of that region still remain. As the Governments involved and members of the international community continue to work to resolve existing difficulties, the Holy See cannot state strongly enough that the right to religious freedom, and the corresponding juridically guaranteed respect for this right, are the source and foundation of truly peaceful coexistence. Moreover, it is not sufficient that the commitment to ensuring such freedom be expressed; it must influence in a real and practical way the actions of political and religious leaders, and the behaviour of believers themselves. In this context, I am pleased to note your emphasis on the importance of mutual respect, understanding and dialogue among the different religious traditions present in Egypt. Not only is this important for national unity; it also means that all believers, as equal citizens, are able to play their part in the building up of Egyptian society. The whole life of the nation is enhanced by the harmonious blending of its people's different religious and cultural traditions.

Mr Ambassador, I am confident that as you fulfil your mission the cordial bonds of friendship which exist between the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Holy See will be further strengthened and enriched. I offer you my good wishes and assure you that the different offices of the Roman Curia will be ever ready to assist you. Upon Your Excellency and your fellow-citizens I invoke abundant divine blessings.

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\**Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, vol. XIX, 2 p. 506-508.

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