



# The Holy See

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***ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II  
TO H.E. MR YAHYA ALI MOHAMED AL-ABIAD,  
AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF YEMEN TO THE HOLY SEE\****

*Thursday, 27 May 2004*

*Your Excellency,*

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Vatican as you present the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Yemen to the Holy See. I appreciate the cordial greetings which you have conveyed from the President, His Excellency Ali Abdallah Saleh. I warmly reciprocate them and assure the Government and citizens of your nation of my prayers for the country's peace and well-being. It is my fervent hope that the friendship which has developed over the last few years between the Republic of Yemen and the Holy See will deepen and be marked by further signs of mutual trust and respect.

I am grateful for your observations made in recognition of the untiring efforts of the Holy See to promote dialogue as a means to peace and the alleviation of conflict in the Middle East and other parts of our troubled world. The Church certainly shares Yemen's desire to build solid foundations for peace on enduring moral principles which find their source in the fundamental God-given dignity of the human person. Indeed the Holy See's activity in the international forum stems from this specific vision of the human person, and from the conviction that when it is undermined or abandoned the very foundation of human society is threatened. This perspective of development calls for the advancement of freedom through the political recognition of the duty to guarantee human rights. Not least of these rights are: the freedom of authentic religious practice; the entitlement to build and maintain places of worship, including those for religious minorities; active participation of all citizens in democratic civic life; and access to education.

Against the backdrop of the human tragedy of tyranny and war there has arisen an opportunity – indeed a duty – for nations to construct that lasting peace for which the human family longs (cf. *Message for the 2004 World Day of Peace*, Introduction). This requires the firm conviction that peace is possible, that it can be taught and protected, and that any activity by individuals or groups

contrary to peace is unacceptable (cf. *ibid.*, nos. 4, 5). Your Government's recent successful efforts to root out the evil perpetuated by terrorist groups have been rightly welcomed by the international community. Such initiatives are positive and necessary steps towards the building of a civilization of love in which all peoples can be secure and live in peace.

Since the unification of North and South Yemen almost fifteen years ago, your government has introduced various programmes with the object of improving the standard of living of Yemen's citizens. Authentic development requires a coordinated plan of national progress which honours the legitimate aspirations of all sectors of society and to which political and civic leaders can be held accountable. In fact human history teaches us time and time again that if such programmes are to effect lasting change for the good, they must be grounded in the practice of transparent governance and accompanied by an impartial judiciary system, political freedom and a robust independent press. Without these foundations common to all civilized societies, the hope for progress, to which every human being rightly aspires, remains elusive. For this reason I have said on numerous occasions that all forms of corruption are a scourge which affronts the inviolable dignity of every person and paralyzes a nation's social, economic and cultural advancement.

Mr Ambassador I was pleased to learn of your nation's commitment to the young generation and the creation of educational opportunities for it. It is indeed the duty of the state to ensure that all its citizens have access to an adequate education and are prepared for the proper exercise of their civic rights and duties. Where schools, training institutes and universities function in a professional manner and are staffed by people of personal integrity with a love of learning, hope is offered to a nation and most especially to its young. Education is a highly effective means to break the cycle of poverty which still afflicts so many families today and it is increasingly being recognized by the international community as the main road to peace. Through the learning and socialization gained through schooling, boys and girls from all strata of society are integrated into a nation's civic life and thus able to have the satisfaction of contributing to it.

The Catholic Church, in service of the human family, is prepared to reach out to all members of Yemeni society without distinction, striving to promote with them the values common to all peoples of peace, justice, solidarity and freedom. Her charitable mission, particularly to the poor and suffering, forms part of her "commitment to practical and concrete love for every human being" (*Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 49) and is already much appreciated in your country. While the Church is willing to contribute even more extensively to the country's human development programmes, it must also be recalled that Christian charity is always more than simply humanitarian aid. For the Catholic Church, her acts of charity are inextricably linked to the celebration of the Eucharist from which she draws the spiritual power needed to sustain the life of her people and carry out her mission. For this reason it is particularly important that the Catholic community in the Republic of Yemen receives authorization – as already promised – to construct a Church and Pastoral Centre in Sana'a and, in Aden, have its property returned to it.

Your Excellency, I am confident that the diplomatic mission which you begin today will further strengthen the bonds of understanding and cooperation existing between Yemen and the Holy See. I assure you that the various offices of the Roman Curia are willing to assist you in the fulfilment of your duties. With my sincere good wishes, I invoke upon you, your family and all the people of Yemen, abundant divine blessings.

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*\*Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II, vol. XXVII, 1, p. 689-691.*

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