



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
ON THE OCCASION OF THE PRESENTATION OF THE LETTERS OF CREDENCE
BY THE AMBASSADORS OF BURUNDI, FIJI, MAURITIUS, MOLDOVA, SWEDEN AND TUNISIA**

*Clementine Hall
Thursday, 15 December 2016*

[Multimedia]

Your Excellencies,

I am pleased to receive you for presentation of the Letters accrediting you as Ambassadors Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Holy See on the part of your respective countries: Burundi, Fiji, Mauritius, Moldova, Sweden and Tunisia. I thank you for your presence, which attests to your desire to maintain and develop the relations of esteem and cooperation which you enjoy with the Holy See, and I ask you to convey to the Heads of State whom you represent my gratitude and the assurance of my prayers for them and for their nations.

You have come from distant and very different areas of the world. Here in Rome this is always a source of satisfaction, since the horizon of the Holy See is intrinsically universal. This is due to the vocation and mission entrusted by God to the Successor of the Apostle Peter, a mission that is essentially religious, yet in the course of history has also involved relations with states and those who govern them. The Catholic Church, whose centre of unity and direction is found, as it were, in the Holy See, is called to pass on and bear witness to those spiritual and moral values grounded in the very nature of human beings and society, and which, as such, can be shared by all those committed to the pursuit of the common good.

Preeminent among these values is that of peace, as seen in the fact that for fifty years now, the Popes have dedicated the first day of January to peace, addressing a special Message to the world's civil and religious authorities, and to all men and women of goodwill. The [Message for the coming World Day of Peace](#), published just three days ago, has as its theme: *Nonviolence: A Style of Politics for Peace*. The happy occasion of our meeting today allows me to share with you some brief reflections on that theme.

Nonviolence is a typical example of a universal value that finds fulfilment in the Gospel of Christ but is also a part of other noble and ancient spiritual traditions. In a world like our own, sadly marked by wars and numerous conflicts, to say nothing of widespread violence evident in various ways in day-to-day life, the choice of nonviolence as a style of life is increasingly demanded in the exercise of responsibility at every level, from family education, to social and civil commitment, to political activity and international relations. In every situation, this means rejecting violence as a method for resolving conflicts and dealing with them instead through dialogue and negotiation.

In a particular way, those who hold public office on the national and international levels are called to cultivate a nonviolent style in their consciences and in the exercise of their duties. This is not the same as weakness or passivity; rather it presupposes firmness, courage and the ability to face issues and conflicts with intellectual honesty, truly seeking the common good over and above all partisan interest, be it ideological, economic or political. In the course of the past century, marred by wars and genocides of unheard-of proportions, we have nonetheless seen outstanding examples of how nonviolence, embraced with conviction and practised consistently, can yield significant results, also on the social and political plane. Some peoples, and indeed entire nations, thanks to the efforts of nonviolent leaders, peacefully achieved the goals of freedom and justice. This is the path to pursue now and in the future. This is the way of peace. Not a peace proclaimed by words but in fact denied by pursuing strategies of domination, backed up by scandalous outlays for arms, while so many people lack the very necessities of life.

Dear Ambassadors, it is my desire, and that of the Holy See, to advance, together with the governments of your countries, this process of promoting peace and those other values that contribute to the integral development of individuals and society. With this in mind, I now offer you my heartfelt best wishes for the mission that you begin today, while assuring you of the ready cooperation of the Roman Curia. Upon you and your families, and upon your respective countries, I invoke an abundance of divine blessings.