



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO H.E. Mr ALI AKBAR NASERI
AMBASSADOR OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN
TO THE HOLY SEE***

Thursday, 29 October 2009

Mr Ambassador,

I am pleased to welcome you on this day on which you are presenting the Letters of Credence as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Holy See. I express to you my gratitude for the courteous words which you have addressed to me, and likewise for the sentiments that you have expressed on behalf of H.E. Mr Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, President of the Republic. I would be grateful if you were to thank him in return and assure him of my cordial wishes for the entire Nation.

Your presence here this morning manifests your country's interest in developing good relations with the Holy See. Mr Ambassador, as you know through its presence in international institutions and its bilateral relations with numerous Countries, the Holy See aims to defend and promote the dignity of the human person. Thus it seeks to be at the service of the good of the human family, demonstrating particular interest in ethical, moral and humanitarian aspects in relations among peoples. In this perspective, the Holy See aims to strengthen its relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran, and promote reciprocal understanding and collaboration with a view to the common good.

Iran is a great Nation that possesses eminent spiritual traditions, and its people has a profound religious sensibility. This can be a reason for hope in an increasing openness and a trusting collaboration with the international community. For its part, the Holy See will always be ready to work in conjunction with those who serve the cause of peace and promote the dignity that the Creator bestowed upon every human being. Today everyone must hope for and support a new phase of international cooperation, one that is more solidly founded on humanitarian principles and on effective aid for those who suffer, and depends less on cold calculations of exchange and

of technical and economic benefits.

Faith in the one God must bring all believers closer, impelling them to work together for the defense and promotion of fundamental human values. Among the universal rights, religious freedom and freedom of conscience play a fundamental role, because they constitute the basis of the other freedoms. Defense of other rights that stem from the dignity of the person and of peoples particularly the promotion of the safeguarding of life, of justice and of solidarity must be, in turn, the object of true collaboration. Moreover, as I have often had the opportunity to emphasize, it is an urgent necessity of our time to stabilize cordial relations among believers of different religions, in order to construct a world that is more human and in greater harmony with God's plan for Creation. I am therefore pleased with the existence of the regular meetings, on themes of common interest, organized regularly and jointly by the [Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue](#) and The Organization of Culture and Islamic Relations. By contributing to the common search for what is just and true, meetings of this kind allow everyone to grow in reciprocal knowledge and to cooperate in reflecting on the important issues concerning human life.

Indeed, Catholics have been present in Iran since the first centuries of Christianity, and they have always been an integral part of the life and the culture of the Nation. This community is truly Iranian and its centuries-old experience of healthy coexistence with Muslim believers is very helpful in the promotion of greater understanding and cooperation. The Holy See feels sure that the Iranian Authorities will be ready to strengthen and guarantee Christians the freedom to profess their faith, and that they will assure the Catholic community the essential conditions for its existence. In particular, these include the possibility to have an adequate number of Religious and to enjoy freedom of movement in the country in order to guarantee their religious service to the faithful. In view of this, I hope that a trusting and sincere dialogue may develop with the Country's institutions, so as to improve the situation of the Christian community and of their activity in the context of civil society, and also to increase their sense of belonging in national life. For its part, the Holy See whose nature and whose mission is precisely to be directly involved in the life of local Churches wishes to make the necessary efforts to assist the Catholic community in Iran to keep alive the signs of the Christian presence, in a spirit of goodwill and understanding with everyone.

Mr Ambassador, I would like to conclude by taking the opportunity of this happy occasion to warmly greet the Catholic community living in Iran, and also their Pastors. The Pope is near to all of the faithful and prays for them so that while perseveringly preserving their own identity and remaining loyal to their land they may collaborate generously with all of their fellow countrymen towards the development of the Nation.

Your Excellency, as you begin your mission to the Holy See, I offer you my best wishes for its success. I assure you that you will always find in my collaborators understanding support in accomplishing its fulfilment.

I wholeheartedly invoke upon you, upon your family, upon your collaborators, and likewise upon all Iranians, an abundance of Blessings of the Almighty.

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