



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO H.E. MR. MANUEL TOMÁS FERNANDES PEREIRA,
NEW AMBASSADOR OF PORTUGAL TO THE HOLY SEE***

Friday, 22 October 2010

Mr Ambassador,

I gladly take this opportunity of the presentation of the Letters of Credence with which today you are officially appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Portugal to the Holy See, to welcome you. As I congratulate you on your appointment, I express my best wishes to you for your new mission that intends to make a new contribution to building up the friendly relations that already exist between your country and this Apostolic See.

As you recalled in your greeting, faith and history have united to forge a special bond between the Portuguese People and the Successor of Peter, a bond that is entrusted to the responsibility of each successive generation and for which we must never cease to thank Christ, the Good Shepherd of his Church and the Lord of history, of individual people and of nations.

The expression of the noble sentiments that enliven you on this day, which is certainly very important, deserves my full attention. I would like first of all to express my gratitude for the words you have addressed to me and then to reciprocate the sentiments of esteem that H.E. Mr Aníbal Cavaco Silva, President of the Republic, has conveyed to me through you, Your Excellency. I ask you in turn to be kind enough to convey to the President my gratitude for them, together with my encouragement and good wishes for his lofty mission. Please assure him of my prayers to the Most High for the prosperity and spiritual good of all the Portuguese.

While I was preparing for this Meeting with you, Mr Ambassador, the edifying and happy memories that I cherish in my heart of my [Visit to Portugal](#) last May sprang to mind. I would like once again to thank everyone for their contribution to the serenity and fruitfulness of this Visit which had a far-

reaching effect, as is testified by the innumerable messages sent to me alluding to those unforgettable days.

I shall never forget the warm welcome I was given nor the kind and respectful way in which my words were received. I consider that all this is also of social importance of wherever society increases and people are strengthened in goodness thanks to the message of faith, social coexistence also benefits and citizens feel readier to serve the common good.

With its presence in the international forum the Holy See focuses all its efforts on serving the cause of the integral promotion of man and of peoples. Everyone must be convinced that the obstacles to this promotion are not only economic but also depend on deeper attitudes and values: the moral and spiritual values that determine the behaviour of every human being, to himself, to others and to the whole of creation. Your presence here, Mr Ambassador, testifies to Portugal's desire to give an important place to these values without which a society cannot be firmly established.

When the Church in your country furthers the awareness that these same values must inspire both public and private life, she does not do so out of political ambition but rather in order to be faithful to the mission that her divine Founder has entrusted to her. Since by her nature and mission the Church, as the Second Vatican Council says, "is universal in that she is not committed to any one culture or to any political, economic or social system. Hence she can be a very close bond between the various communities of men and nations, provided they have trust in the Church and guarantee her true freedom to carry out her mission" (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 42).

She does not represent partial or temporary models of society but endeavours to transform hearts and minds so that men and women may rediscover and recognize themselves in the full truth of their humanity.

Given that the Church's mission is a moral and religious one the Church respects the State's specific area of competence. At the same time she encourages Christians to assume their civic responsibilities fully so that, with the other citizens, they may contribute effectively to the common good and to the great human causes.

Respectful collaboration and loyal understanding between the Church and the civil authority cannot but benefit Portuguese society.

Motivated by this hope, the new Concordat between the Holy See and Portugal which you recalled Mr Ambassador, was signed six years ago [[18 May 2004](#)]. On that occasion Pope John Paul II saw this juridical instrument as a confirmation of the "reciprocal sentiments of respect that mark the relations between the Holy See and Portugal", and expressed the hope that the new

Concordat might “encourage ever better understanding between the State Authorities and the Pastors of the Church for the common good of the Nation”.

Mr Ambassador, I listened with joy to your aspiration to encourage the efforts being made for the full and faithful application of the Concordat in the various contexts of the Catholic Church and of Portuguese society.

Before concluding this Meeting, I wish to assure you, Mr Ambassador, of the full collaboration and support of the Holy See as you carry out the lofty mission that has been entrusted to you. Through the intercession of Our Lady of Fatima I ask the good Lord of Heaven to assist with an abundance of his gifts to you, Your Excellency, your distinguished family, all who serve the common good of the Portuguese Nation and all its people, to whom I impart my Blessing.

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