



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. MR AYAD ALLAWI
PRIME MINISTER OF IRAQ***

Wednesday, 4 November 2004

Your Excellency, I am pleased to welcome you to the Vatican and to assure you of my continued closeness to the Iraqi people, so sorely tried by the tragic sufferings of recent years. I pray for all the victims of terrorism and wanton violence, for their families, and for all those who generously work for the reconstruction of your country. I wish to encourage the efforts made by the Iraqi people to establish democratic institutions which will be truly representative and committed to defending the rights of all, in complete respect for the ethnic and religious diversity which has always been a source of enrichment for your country. I am confident that the Christian community, present in Iraq from apostolic times, will make its own contribution to the growth of democracy and the building of a future of peace in the region. Upon you and your associates, and upon all the beloved people of Iraq, I cordially invoke the abundant blessings of Almighty

God.

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