



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. Mr ANWAR SABRI ABDUL RAZZAK
AMBASSADOR OF IRAQ TO THE HOLY SEE***

Thursday, 18 December 1980

Mr Ambassador,

It gives me pleasure to welcome Your Excellency as the diplomatic representative of your noble country. I am confident that your good will and your talents will contribute to the further strengthening of the existing friendship between the Republic of Iraq and the Holy See. I am grateful for the greetings that you bring me from His Excellency President Saddam Hussain and I would ask you to convey to him my sincere good wishes for his well-being and that of the Iraqi people.

The favour that at the present moment I most fervently beg of God for your people, and for all the peoples of the earth, is the blessing of peace. Peace is a fundamental and an all-embracing blessing.

Where peace is lacking, a basic element in human happiness is wanting and many of the other elements are diminished or destroyed. It is a blessing of such worth that we should be prepared to make sacrifices in order to obtain or preserve it. It benefits all and confers honour on those who seek it, and all have the duty to work for it with dignity but also with constancy and courage.

I therefore earnestly hope that both sides in the conflict between Iraq and Iran will show real readiness to reach a negotiated settlement based on justice and mutual respect. Distinguished international statesmen are endeavouring to initiate such negotiations. I trust that they will be successful in their endeavours. I pray that God will give them strength and wisdom and prepare the hearts of all those involved in the conflict to accept the great blessing that is peace. May the peoples of the two countries, both of which are dear to me, act in accordance with the words

“Make peace between brothers, and fear God that mercy may be shown to you”, and may they enjoy the grace and favour of the All-knowing Lord of mankind.

Your country’s Catholics are willing and prepared in every way to play their full part as citizens, since there is no contradiction between being a Christian and being a loyal member of one’s own nation, whether one belongs to an Arab country or to any other country. They wish to contribute to the best of their ability to material and spiritual progress, in difficult times for Iraq as well as in favourable circumstances. I would also mention the valuable, indeed often irreplaceable, work done by non-Iraqi religious men and women in the various Catholic institutions. I trust that they will be able to continue that work for the good not only of their Christian brothers and sisters but also of numerous other citizens of Iraq.

May all the people of Iraq soon enjoy peace and its attendant blessings. This is the wish of the whole Catholic Church, which, as I said when addressing the United Nations General Assembly last year, “in every place on earth proclaims a message of peace, prays for peace, educates for peace”.

I invoke divine favour also on Your Excellency and your own mission, that it may effectively serve the cause of peace.

*AAS 73 (1981), p. 32-33.

Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II, vol.III, 2 pp. 1720-1721.

L'Attività della Santa Sede 1980 pp. 839-840.

L'Osservatore Romano 19.12.1980 pp.1, 2.

L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English 1981 n.4 p.8.

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