



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE PAUL VI
TO THE FIRST AMBASSADOR OF THE TUNISIAN REPUBLIC
TO THE HOLY SEE**

Saturday, 22 April 1972

Mr. Ambassador,

We appreciate the noble sentiments that Your Excellency has just expressed to us, and we are aware at the same time of the deep significance of what might be called this historic event: the presentation of the Letters of Credence of the first Ambassador of the Tunisian Republic to the Holy See. It seals our mutual desire to set up new and constant relations and it opens an era that we hope will be not only peaceful but also fruitful, on both sides.

Our wishes go in the first place to you, Mr. Ambassador, for the successful accomplishment of your mission, and beyond you, to His Excellency President Habib Bourguiba, whose visit to our venerated predecessor you recalled. Our words are also addressed to the whole Tunisian people, wishing them happiness and prosperity.

The diplomatic relations that Your Excellency inaugurates this morning will make it possible, we are confident, to consolidate this collaboration; they will also strengthen the relations between the Tunisian Republic and the Holy See itself, for the purpose of promoting peace, cooperation and development on the international scene know the interest your Government manifests in these great humanitarian aims about which the Organization of the United Nations is rightly concerned, anxious as it is to end dangerously tense situations and to propose peaceful solutions that respect the right of persons and minorities. We appreciate this all the more in that, on our side, we incessantly invite all men of goodwill really to prepare the ways to peace. It is highly important to avoid new risks of war and, in conflicts that are unfortunately going on, to reach a negotiated peace, in justice and dignity. But, on a deeper plane; it is a question of satisfying, beyond the selfishness or exasperated nationalism of too many countries, the legitimate aspirations of races

and peoples, and of creating above all the conditions for a complete development in solidarity, in other words, for an «enhanced being» in accordance with the vocation inscribed in them by the Creator. This hope must be open also to the poorest.

Your country has known glorious pages of history which all recall. It has given the Catholic Church some of her greatest pastors, whose noble figures you delicately conjured up. Today, in the framework of the full independence of the Tunisian Republic, the effective recognition of the civil personality and freedom of the Church is one of the indispensable elements to look to the future with the serenity born of mutual understanding.

Christians ask for nothing else, Your Excellency knows, than to be able to nourish their faith, express it in their liturgy, live it in the web of their everyday occupations and assure the education of their children, while respecting other religious convictions. To speak of respect would be to say too little: sincere esteem, desire for dialogue, being deeply rooted in Arab culture, without isolating the latter, from the other great human and spiritual movements, this is what should characterize the Christians, it seems to us. The Gospel itself invites them to this friendly presence, to service and love. Thus they make a disinterested contribution to the cultural and spiritual progress, to the social well-being of all, which your Government is pursuing tenaciously in so many fields.

You will be able to witness here, Mr. Ambassador, this pursuit of justice and peace. You yourself bring to this new post a wide experience, acquired particularly at international Organizations, which will certainly help you in your delicate mission. We rejoice at this. Expressing once more our best wishes, we warmly implore the favours of Almighty God on yourself, the members of your family and the whole Tunisian people.

*ORa n.18 p.3.