



The Holy See

***DISCORSO DI GIOVANNI PAOLO II
A S.E. IL SIGNOR MONCEF BEN MAHMOUND,
NUOVO AMBASCIATORE DELLA TUNISIA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE***

Giovedì, 24 novembre 1988

Mr. Ambassador,

It is always a joy for me to welcome those who have been chosen and accredited to the Holy See as Ambassadors Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of their governments. Please convey my thanks to His Excellency Mr. Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, President of the Tunisian Republic, for the respectful greetings and the warm good wishes which he has asked you to express to me, both for myself and for my pontificate.

The sentiments and the convictions contained in your noble address absorbed all my interest. Your first words were intended to echo faithfully the mind of President Ben Ali, namely his strong desire to continue and to strengthen the bonds of cordial understanding between Tunisia and the Apostolic See of Rome. This makes me profoundly happy. In this respect, history reserves happy surprises for us. As early as the eleventh century, a Muslim Emir, King of what was then Setif Mauritania, sent to Pope Gregory VII a priest to be ordained to the episcopate. Gregory VII thanked the king for his kindness and he even invited the Christians and the Muslims to meet at the summit of the spiritual life.

You also had the kindness – Mr. Ambassador, to underline the unceasing efforts displayed by the Holy See in support of objectives which are fundamental for the true welfare of man and of all peoples: absolute respect for every human person, the ever more equitable sharing of goods, the participation of the people in public life and the formation that such a right requires, recourse to the ways of dialogue on a national or international scale and the abandonment of the ways of deadly, useless and impoverishing conflicts, the objective of every State worthy of the name which is to be at the service of all the citizens. You did not hesitate, through personal conviction, certainly, to

refer to the words which I often have occasion to pronounce, particularly in the course of my apostolic journeys, namely that respect for every human person and for his inalienable rights flows from his creation in the image of God and from his transcendent destiny.

You will experience just this satisfaction in the framework of diplomacy in general and your mission to the Holy See in particular – and, I sincerely wish this for Your Excellency – that of working in this defence and promotion of human rights, without forgetting that every human individual also has duties with respect to others. In a word, by the discretion which characterizes diplomats, you will be contributing not only to the strengthening of the cordial relations between your Government and the Apostolic See of Rome, but also to the production of the most invaluable good of humanity: peace in justice and fraternity. I am sure that the bonds of friendship you will establish with the members of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See will be pleasing and beneficial to you. My collaborators also will make it their duty to offer you all the support which you have a right to expect from them.

Finally, I wish you happiness as you carry out your high mission with the Holy See. May your stay in Rome, Mr. Ambassador, bring you new cultural joys, enriching views on the world of our time, the pleasure of being able to see the action of the Holy See and something of the mystery of the Church from the inside! I entrust to the one, all-powerful and merciful God, invoked by our Muslim brothers and by Christians, the success of the mission which you are inaugurating today, as also the present and the future of your dear country.

**L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English 1989 n.2 p.6.*

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