



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF PAUL VI
TO THE NEW AMBASSADOR OF THE ARAB REPUBLIC OF SYRIA
TO THE HOLY SEE***

Thursday, 5 August 1971

Mr. Ambassador,

We thank Your Excellency for the delicate homage you have just rendered us in your capacity as the new Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Syrian Arab Republic. We bid you a warm welcome and we express our respectful greeting to the President of the Republic, who accredits you to the Holy See today, and our affectionate esteem for the whole Syrian people.

Did not the recent inauguration of the "St. Paul Memorial" express, better than our words, the particular veneration that the Holy See manifests for the Christian tradition of your dear country, as well as its deep interest in Syria? Before coming to testify to his faith here, it was in fact at the gates of Damascus that the great Apostle Paul began to receive Christ's light. And we hope that the modest Centre of study and reflection that we have erected there will become a spiritual high place, a source of unity, a fountainhead of charity. The significant meeting that the opening ceremony constituted is already a token of hope, and we are grateful to the civil Authorities of your country for the benevolence they manifested on this occasion.

Our Catholic sons, is it necessary to repeat here, wish inseparably to find the means to uphold their own religious life and to take part, with all their compatriots, in the common good of the nation. It is in this sense, as you know, that they are attached to the scholastic establishments they have founded. The education imparted there aims at forming the whole man, initiating him not only to a solid intellectual and technical training, which is necessary today, but also to the indispensable spiritual values, so dear to a nation of believers, to the sense of justice, to generous friendship towards all brothers, to active loyalty towards their native country. We continue to hope that this difficult question will soon find a happy solution, in which each party's legitimate concerns

will be satisfied, in the interest of all.

Another fundamental question continues to preoccupy us of course. You yourself dealt with it at length, and we cannot ignore it: the question of peace in the Middle East. This region has been caught up for so many years in a climate of insecurity, with its train of wars, injustice and hatred, the cost of which is always borne by the poor.

Your Excellency knows with what attention we follow all these events, with the sole concern of seeing an honourable and just peace established as soon as possible. And meanwhile we wish to contribute to preparing the way for it, according to our competence and our mission of peace, and we will continue to do our utmost straightaway, to help on the human plane all those in need.

These are the main wishes, Mr. Ambassador, that your presence suggests to us at the moment when you are inaugurating your high mission here. May the fruitful bonds that link the Syrian Arab Republic and the Holy See become closer and develop, through you, in an atmosphere of natural trust and collaboration! It is with these sentiments that we invoke the blessings of Almighty God on your person, on the noble Syrian people and on their leaders.

*ORa n.33 p.2.