



# BENEDICT XVI'S ADDRESS TO IRANIAN ENVOY

## "Faith in the One God Must Bring All Believers Closer"

VATICAN CITY, OCT. 29, 2009 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Here is a translation of Benedict XVI's address upon receiving in audience today Ali Akbar Naseri, the new ambassador from Iran to the Holy See.

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Mr. Ambassador:

I am pleased to receive you on this day in which you present the Letters that accredit you as ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Holy See. I express my gratitude for the affable words you addressed to me, as well as for the good wishes you have transmitted on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, president of the republic. In response, I would be grateful if you would thank him and assure him of my cordial wishes for the whole nation.

Your presence here, this morning, manifests your country's interest in the development of good relations with the Holy See. As you know, Mr. Ambassador, by your presence in international entities and bilateral relations with numerous countries, the Holy See wishes to defend and promote human dignity. It also wishes to be at the service of the good of the human family, paying particular attention to the technical, moral and humanitarian aspects of relations between peoples. From this point of view, the Holy See wishes to consolidate relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran, and to foster mutual understanding and collaboration for the common good.

Iran is a great nation that has eminent spiritual traditions and its people have a profound religious sensibility. This can be a reason for hope for a growing openness and confident collaboration with the international community. For its part, the Holy See will always be

willing to work in harmony with those who serve the cause of peace and promote the dignity with which the Creator has endowed all human beings. Today we must all expect and support a new phase of international cooperation, more solidly based on humanitarian principles and on effective aid to those who suffer, than on cold calculations of exchanges and technical and economic benefits.

Faith in the one God must bring all believers closer and encourage them to work together for the defense and promotion of fundamental human values. Among the universal rights, religious liberty and freedom of conscience occupy an essential place, because they are the source of the other liberties. The defense of other rights that stem from the dignity of persons and populations, in particular the promotion of the protection of life, justice and solidarity, must also be the object of a true collaboration. Moreover, as I have often had the opportunity to underline, the establishment of cordial relations between believers of the different religions is an urgent need of our time, to build a more human world, more conformed to the plan of God on creation. Hence I celebrate the existence, for several years, of meetings organized regularly, jointly by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the Organization for Islamic Culture and Relations, on topics of common interest. Contributing to seeking together what is just and correct, those meetings allow all to progress in reciprocal knowledge and to cooperate in the reflection of great questions that affect the life of humanity.

On the other hand, Catholics have been present in Iran since the first centuries of Christianity and have always been an integral part of the life and culture of the nation. This community is truly Iranian and its age-old experience of coexistence with Muslim believers is of great usefulness to promote greater understanding and cooperation. The Holy See trusts that the Iranian authorities will be able to reinforce and guarantee to Christians the liberty to profess their faith and to ensure for the Catholic community the essential conditions for its existence, especially the possibility of having sufficient religious personnel and the facilities of movement in the country to ensure the religious service of the faithful. From this perspective, I hope that a confident and sincere dialogue will develop with the country's institutions to improve the situation of the Christian communities and their activities in the context of the civil society, so that its sense of belonging to the national life will increase. For its part, the Holy See, whose nature and mission is to be interested directly in the life of the local Churches, wishes to make the necessary efforts to help the

Catholic community in Iran to maintain alive the signs of the Christian presence, in a spirit of understanding and of good will with all.

Mr. Ambassador, finally I would like to take advantage of this pleasant occasion to greet affectionately the Catholic communities living in Iran, as well as their pastors. The Pope is close to all the faithful and prays for them so that maintaining with perseverance their own identity and remaining linked to their land, they may collaborate generously with all their compatriots in the development of the nation.

Excellency, at the beginning of your mission to the Holy See, I wish you every success. I can assure you that you will always find understanding and support in my collaborators for its happy fulfillment.

I invoke from my heart on your person, your family, your collaborators and on all Iranians abundant blessings of the Most High.

[Translation by ZENIT]