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Ambassador Diaz's remarks to Pope Benedict

Dennis Coday | Oct. 2, 2009 NCR Today

John Allen reported earlier this morning [1] that President Barack Obama's ambassador to the Holy See Miguel Diaz presented his credentials to Pope Benedict XVI today.

The U.S. Embasssy to the Holy See posted Diaz's remarks to its Web site. Here it is:

> Presentation of Credentials Miguel H. Diaz Ambassador of the United States to the Holy See
>
> Remarks
> Vatican City
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> Your Holiness,
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> It is a distinct honor to present to you my credentials as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Holy See and to bring to you warm greetings from President Barack Obama and the American people. I am very grateful to President Obama for the opportunity to represent him and my country to the Holy See. My wife and children, who have accompanied me to Rome, have also welcomed our President?s invitation to serve our country. They join me in offering our familial, cultural, and educational experiences at the service of diplomacy.
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> Your Holiness, I would like to begin by recalling your first meeting with President Obama. President Obama was deeply touched to meet with you and appreciated the opportunity to hear your perspective on many important issues. With his support, the U.S. mission to the Holy See looks forward to building upon twenty-five years of formal diplomatic relations.
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> Your Holiness, since the beginning of your pontificate, your encyclicals have further developed Catholic social teaching, defending the dignity of all persons and inviting the human family to embrace the power of love in order to overcome conflict and divisions. You have consistently argued that ?the love of God is revealed in responsibility for others.? Most recently, in Caritas in Veritate, you pointed out some critical areas that urgently require human responsibility and action. Your emphasis on moral imperatives is unique in the world. You have called for interreligious dialogue for the sake of peace, authentic stewardship of God?s creation in order to combat climate change and ensure food security, an ethical response to the financial crisis to mitigate its impact on the poor, and international cooperation to address issues related to the migration of peoples. Your urgent priorities coincide with those set forth by President Obama, and as Ambassador of the United States I look forward to working with the Holy See to advance our common interests.
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> In his inaugural speech President Obama challenged Americans to assume new responsibilities at home and abroad, highlighting our common humanity. He invited the people of our nation to go beyond simple words, and to embrace bold actions to meet the demands of our times. He has alluded often to the fact that the United States of America is a nation comprised of a great diversity of people, representing a number

of religious traditions. Our nation has been shaped by every language and culture and has welcomed immigrants to its shores from every corner of this world. Indeed, as the President has underscored, America has struggled for centuries to give meaning to the notion that all are created equal, and as Americans, we are dedicated to a simple principle: E pluribus unum??Out of many, one.?

Your Holiness, in his groundbreaking speech in Cairo, President Obama reaffirmed his commitment to democracy and the need to turn interfaith dialogue into interfaith service so as to enable the building of bridges between people and to facilitate humanitarian actions. He argued for the use of power through mutual consent, for respect of the rights of minorities, and for democratic participation to be carried out in the spirit of tolerance and compromise. Above all, President Obama reaffirmed that the one rule central to all religions is that ?we do unto others as we would have them do unto us.?

The United States profoundly respects the Holy See as a sovereign entity, as a humanitarian actor, and as a unique moral voice in the world. The United States and the Holy See have partnered in the cause of noble objectives. Together we have spread peace, supported religious freedom and other human rights, fostered democracy, denounced terrorism, addressed poverty and world hunger, prevented human trafficking, and combated the spread of HIV/AIDS and other terrible diseases. The mission at the Holy See will soon host a conference with Caritas Internationalis on the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS. In the years ahead, we will continue to work with the Holy See and Vatican-affiliated organizations on similar initiatives. In a special way, I wish to express my desire as ambassador to partner with the Holy See on issues related to interfaith, interracial, and intercultural conversations in order to advance the cause of peace and understanding among peoples.

Your Holiness, more than ever the United States realizes that we cannot act alone. Indeed, as you stated so eloquently in your most recent encyclical, ?the development of peoples depends, above all, on a recognition that the human race is a single family working together in true communion, not simply a group of subjects who happen to live side by side.? Reading this, I was reminded of candidate Obama who in his historic address in Berlin entitled ?A World that Stands as One? stated: ?The walls between old allies on either side of the Atlantic cannot stand. The walls between the countries with the most and those with the least cannot stand. The walls between races and tribes; natives and immigrants; Christians and Muslim and Jew cannot stand. These now are the walls we must tear down.? He went on to exhort people of good will everywhere that ?now is the time to build bridges across the globe as strong as the one that bound us across the Atlantic.?

Your Holiness, my nation looks forward to working with the Holy See to ensure that the old and the young may embrace the audacity to hope, celebrate in the fruition of justice, and work together to defend fundamental human rights, economic opportunity for all, peace in our world, and respect for the dignity of all human persons. As I take up my position as the ninth United States Ambassador to the Holy See, I promise to serve as a bridge-builder between the United States and the Holy See. As a representative of President Obama and the great people of the United States of America, I have been entrusted with the responsibility of leading by listening to, and learning from, others. I accept this responsibility with joy and humility and will work to strengthen the indispensable relationship between the Holy See and the United States of America.

Thank you, Your Holiness.

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