



**STATEMENT BY CARD. TARCISIO BERTONE  
SECRETARY OF STATE**

*Saturday, 16 September 2006*

Given the reaction in Muslim quarters to certain passages of the [Holy Father's address at the University of Regensburg](#), and the clarifications and explanations already presented through the Director of the Holy See Press Office, I would like to add the following:

- The position of the Pope concerning Islam is unequivocally that expressed by the conciliar document [Nostra Aetate](#): *"The Church regards with esteem also the Muslims. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself; merciful and all-powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth, Who has spoken to men; they take pains to submit wholeheartedly to even His inscrutable decrees, just as Abraham, with whom the faith of Islam takes pleasure in linking itself, submitted to God. Though they do not acknowledge Jesus as God, they revere Him as a prophet. They also honor Mary, His virgin Mother; at times they even call on her with devotion. In addition, they await the day of judgment when God will render their deserts to all those who have been raised up from the dead. Finally, they value the moral life and worship God especially through prayer, almsgiving and fasting"* (no. 3).

- The Pope's option in favor of inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue is equally unequivocal. In his [meeting with representatives of Muslim communities in Cologne, Germany, on 20 August 2005](#), he said that such dialogue between Christians and Muslims *"cannot be reduced to an optional extra,"* adding: *"The lessons of the past must help us to avoid repeating the same mistakes. We must seek paths of reconciliation and learn to live with respect for each other's identity"*.

- As for the opinion of the Byzantine emperor Manuel II Paleologus which he quoted during his Regensburg talk, the Holy Father did not mean, nor does he mean, to make that opinion his own in any way. He simply used it as a means to undertake - in an academic context, and as is evident from a complete and attentive reading of the text - certain reflections on the theme of the relationship between religion and violence in general, and to conclude with a **clear and radical rejection of the religious motivation for violence, from whatever side it may come**. On this point, it is worth recalling what Benedict XVI himself recently affirmed in his commemorative [Message for the 20th anniversary of the Inter-religious Meeting of Prayer for Peace](#), initiated by his predecessor [John Paul II at Assisi in October 1986](#): *"... demonstrations of violence cannot be attributed to religion as such but to the cultural limitations with which it is lived and develops in time. ... In fact, attestations of the close bond that exists between the relationship with God and the ethics of love are recorded in all great religious traditions"*.

- The Holy Father thus sincerely regrets that certain passages of his address could have sounded offensive to the sensitivities of the Muslim faithful, and should have been interpreted in a manner that in no way corresponds to his intentions. Indeed it was he who, before the religious fervor of Muslim believers, warned secularized Western culture to guard against *"the contempt for God and the cynicism that considers mockery of the sacred to be an exercise of freedom"*.

- In reiterating his respect and esteem for those who profess Islam, he hopes they will be helped to understand the correct meaning of his words so that, quickly surmounting this present uneasy moment,

witness to the "*Creator of heaven and earth, Who has spoken to men*" may be reinforced, and collaboration may intensify "*to promote together for the benefit of all mankind social justice and moral welfare, as well as peace and freedom*" (*Nostra Aetate* no. 3).

