

THE HOLY SEE - THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

His Excellency Archbishop Petar Rajic

Staff Report

The Holy See, with its center based in Vatican City within the city of Rome, Italy, has the oldest diplomatic service in the world. It traces its origins back to the 5th century when the Pope was known to have sent diplomatic representatives called Apostolic Legates to the Byzantine Court, and in turn received diplomatic missions from other states. The oldest Papal Nunciature, or embassy, was established in 1500 in the then Republic of Venice. Often confused with the Vatican City State, which came into existence only in 1929, the Holy See is recognized in international law as a sovereign state and juridical entity, with Permanent Observer status at the United Nations, hence bilateral diplomatic relations are always established between the Holy See and individual nations.

Despite its long-standing diplomatic tradition, the diplomacy of the Holy See is also one of the least-known in the international arena, as most Apostolic Nuncios (Ambassadors of the Holy See) tend to shun the limelight of political and diplomatic dealings, preferring instead to work quietly behind the scenes. Backed by the time-honoured pre-eminence of the Holy See, supported by the spiritual guidance and experience of His Holiness the Pope, and with an enduring belief and trust in their religious faith, the Apostolic Nuncios see their service as a way of giving glory to God and helping humanity.

His Excellency Archbishop Petar Rajic, Apostolic Nuncio of the Holy See to the State of Kuwait, is no different. It took a lot of perseverance on the part of The Times, before we were eventually afforded an exclusive interview with His Excellency, due to his many duties. As the Apostolic Nuncio and Delegate to the Arabian Peninsula, His Grace acts and speaks on behalf of the approximately three million strong Catholic community in the region. Undoubtedly a very busy man, Archbishop Rajic nevertheless found time to grant us an extensive interview.



Dressed in a de rigueur dark jacket and bearing a pectoral cross, the elegant Archbishop Rajic cut a stately figure and welcomed us to the Nunciature (Holy See

– Vatican Embassy). “I was born in 1959 in Toronto, Canada, to immigrant Croatian parents. Following graduation from the University of Toronto, and feeling a

deep void in my spiritual being, I heeded the call to a consecrated life and chose to enter the priesthood.” In 1982, leaving a contemporary Western lifestyle in Toronto, he decided to return to the native land of his parents and entered the inter-diocesan seminary of Sarajevo in Bosnia-Herzegovina. “Graduating with a degree in Philosophy and Theology in 1987, I was ordained a priest of the Diocese of Trebinje-Mrkan in Herzegovina, by the Bishop of Mostar and then returned to Canada to serve among Toronto’s immigrant Croatian community.”

Two years later, in 1989, he was sent to Rome to further his studies by taking a four year post-graduate course in Canon Law at the Pontifical Lateran University. During his sojourn in Rome he was asked to enter the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy in order to prepare for the diplomatic service of the Holy See. In 1993, after earning his Doctorate at the Lateran University and at the same time completing his course of studies at the Academy, he officially became a diplomat of the Holy See. His first

posting abroad was as Secretary to the Apostolic Nunciature in Iran, where he served three years before being assigned to the Apostolic Nunciature in Lithuania. In 1998, he returned to the Vatican and worked at the Holy See’s head office in the Secretariat of State until 2007. From 2007 till 2009, he was an official of the Prefecture of the Papal Household, which can be considered the equivalent of the Pope’s Protocol Department.

“In 2009, I was appointed by His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI as the third resident Apostolic Nuncio and Delegate to the Arabian Peninsula. In March of 2010, following my episcopal ordination, I arrived in Kuwait City to take up my duties. Now, more than a quarter-century after entering the priesthood, I can look back and say the journey so far has been predominantly interesting and yet at times challenging, especially the time I have spent here in this region.”

“The Holy See and Kuwait enjoy a special relationship. In 1968, Kuwait became the first country on the Arabian Peninsula to establish formal diplomatic ties with the Holy See. Initially, for an extended period of three decades, the Nuncios in Iraq and then Lebanon alternated in being accredited also to Kuwait and the other countries of the Gulf. It was only in 2000 that a new Apostolic Nunciature was established in Kuwait, with accreditation over almost the entire Arabian Peninsula. Today, the Holy See also enjoys diplomatic relations with Yemen, Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. The two remaining countries, Oman and Saudi Arabia, comprise part of the Apostolic Delegation since there are no formal diplomatic ties yet.”

“During the last 45 years the Holy See has enjoyed good cordial relations with Kuwait, its people and leadership. Unlike other diplomatic missions, the Nunciature is not involved in promoting economic, political or military ties. The Nunciature, however, does have an interest in following all three sectors in order to be well informed about the events

in the local and regional arena. As representatives of His Holiness the Pope, we serve as a liaison office between the Holy See and the local Catholic Church in the region. While assisting the bishops, priests and sisters in fulfilling their pastoral duties to their parishes, we seek to ensure that the local Catholic and other Christian communities can freely practice their faith and realize their fundamental human rights. In this regard, part of our diplomatic activity involves presenting to the authorities the real needs of our communities so that the required authorization for the construction of more churches in the country can be granted.”

“In the diplomatic realm, our relations with Kuwait are good and there have been several high-profile visits these past years. I remember that in 2009, just before I was appointed as Apostolic Nuncio to Kuwait, I had the privilege of meeting with the then Prime Minister, His Highness Sheikh Nasser Mohammed Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who had come to visit His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI in the Vatican. Later on, in 2010, His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah paid a courtesy call on His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI. Over the years, several other dignitaries from Kuwait have also visited the Holy See.”

“In early 2011, Cardinal Antonio Cañizares Llovera, Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, came to Kuwait on a brief visit to proclaim the Blessed Virgin Mary as Our Lady of Arabia and Patroness of both the Vicariates of Northern and Southern Arabia, and of the entire Arabian Peninsula. This month, we are also preparing to welcome the Substitute for General Affairs of the Secretariat of State (whose role is similar to that of Minister of the Interior), His Grace Archbishop Giovanni Angelo Becciu, who will be coming to Kuwait to officially open our new Apostolic Nunciature.”

“Since 1968, the Catholic Christians in Kuwait, have grown ten-fold and today the faithful number

about 350,000 coming from all other parts of the globe, with the majority originating from Asia. With the majority belonging to the Latin Rite and the rest from various Eastern Catholic Rites, the Church in Kuwait is a growing and vibrant community that worships God in different liturgies and many languages, but all are united in their Catholicity. The faithful find in their parish churches a place of worship and solace, a gathering area for the community that rejuvenates their faith, strengthens their bonds to one another and reminds them of their native homes. This strong spiritual bond with the parish community, inspires and encourages them to engage wholeheartedly in the activities of the Church, thereby finding strength and purpose for their lives.”

Christianity continues to thrive around the world and the Holy See having formal diplomatic relations with 180 countries of the world, guides the billion plus Catholic community. “His Holiness Pope Francis with his energy, flair and warmth in reaching out to the people, will no doubt remind more people of the enthusiasm and joy of the Catholic faith. I like to say that Pope John Paul II gave people hope, Pope Benedict XVI taught us the importance of faith, and Pope Francis is now emphasizing the need for charity. These three theological virtues of faith, hope and charity, are fundamental for belief in God and for maintaining good will, peace and mutual respect amongst all peoples, which is an integral part of the mission of the Church and the Holy See throughout the world.”

The Archbishop concluded with: “We need to remember that our faith in God is not something we carry around as a burden, but that faith helps us carry our burdens through life.”

(in association with
“The Times, Kuwait”)



Press Release

NOORTEL TO PARTICIPATE IN E-GOVERNMENT FORUM

Mr. Ayman Al-Bannaw, the Chairman and Managing Director of Noor Telecommunications Co. (NOORTEL) announced today that the company shall participate in the upcoming “E-Government Forum: Recent Trends, Security Risks, and Implementation Challenges” that shall be held by the Central Agency for Information Technology (CAIT) under the patronage of His Highness the Prime



Mr. Ayman Al-Bannaw

Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad AL-Sabah during the period of 11-13 November. Mr. Al-Bannaw said “This participation conforms to NOORTEL’s strategy of supporting CAIT’s efforts to develop the e-government program of Kuwait.”

The Chairman and Managing Director of NOORTEL said that Kuwait was the first country in the region to introduce computers

and implement automated systems in government agencies back in the early seventies of last century. This heritage provides Kuwait with a strong technical and competent IT expertise and a large supporting and trained user community that can efficiently support moving into a futuristic e-government program.

Commenting on NOORTEL’s participation in the Forum, Mr.

Al-Bannaw said “There could be many technical, administrative, and bureaucratic complexities that hinder the development of a comprehensive and integrated e-government program, but we are confident that CAIT is capable to lead the effort. Yet, we have a high sense of responsibility that we should support CAIT’s efforts along with all qualified private and relevant public sector organizations.”

He confirmed that the private sector is eager to play his role in developing this nationally vital program.

Concluding his statement, Mr. Al-Bannaw said that NOORTEL, and through its five subsidiaries, hundreds of qualified and specialized staff, and a significant heritage of experience derived from many successfully implemented projects, can play an important role in driv-

ing the e-government program forward. He finally hoped that His Highness the Prime Minister and the whole political leadership support CAIT’s and other government agencies’ efforts in developing the e-government program along with the dynamic private sector to end up with more efficient, relevant, and transparent government services that pave the way for a better Kuwait.