

New U.S. ambassador to Vatican arrives in Rome

ROME - The new U.S. ambassador to the Vatican, Mary Ann Glendon, arrived in Rome Feb. 15 and said she looked forward to working with the Vatican on issues of religious freedom and religious tolerance.

Glendon, a Harvard University law professor, has served with Vatican agencies and diplomatic missions in the past. She said she hoped that experience would help her advance U.S.-Vatican relations in her new post.

The United States and the Vatican have a “common commitment to the human dignity of every man, woman and child,” she said in a statement to reporters at the Rome airport Feb. 15.

“Both the United States and the Holy See have a long history in which faith and reason are inseparably united in that quest,” she said.

Glendon said the United States works for human dignity by “vigorously promoting human rights and religious freedom and by striving to foster dialogue and tolerance among persons of different faiths and cultures.”

As ambassador, she said, she expects to work with the Vatican “to advance those lofty goals.”

“I will do everything in my power to build on and enrich the strong relationship between (the) United States and the Holy See,” she said.

Glendon has resigned her position as president of the Vatican’s Pontifical Academy for Social Sciences, but will remain a member of the academy, embassy sources said.

She was expected to present her credentials in an audience with Pope Benedict XVI at the end of February.

Glendon spoke in a ceremonial room at Leonardo da Vinci Airport, standing at a

podium flanked by U.S. and Vatican flags. She read part of her statement in Italian, apologizing to reporters for keeping them waiting because of a late flight.

She said she looked forward to spending a year in Rome, which has been like a “second home” to her. Glendon’s oldest daughter and three grandchildren live in Rome.