



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO THE NEW AMBASSADOR OF HAITI
TO THE HOLY SEE****

Monday, 14 November 1983

Mr. Ambassador,

1. You have just expressed to me the emotion with which you inaugurate your functions as Ambassador of the Republic of Haiti to the Holy See, a delicate mission which Your Excellency considers as a privilege. For my part, I thank you for your kind words, for the grateful memory you recalled, for the greetings you have conveyed and for the willingness you display to develop in a harmonious and fruitful way the good relations that exist between your Government and the Holy See.

When I received your predecessor on 14 December 1979, I alluded to the filial attachment of the Haitian people to the Pope and to its eager desire to receive him in their own country, and I added : «We will do everything in our power to realize this proposal».

Since last 9 March it has been an accomplished fact. To be sure, at the end of a very intense apostolic journey in nearly all the countries of Central America, my stay in Haiti had, alas, to be of short duration. But I left in my mind and in my heart a lasting souvenir which allows me henceforth to rejoin your dear country more easily on the level of pastoral concern and prayer.

2. I had the opportunity of meeting at Port-au-Prince His Excellency President Jean-Claude Duvalier, whom I would ask you to thank for his respectful greeting. I was touched by the warm reception he gave me. I appreciated the willingness he expressed to proceed with an updating of the concordat terms, in the line generally adopted according to the spirit of Vatican Council II and I hope that a happy conclusion of the transactions now in progress will soon be reached. You will kindly assure him of my gratitude for this display of good will, of my confidence with regard to the

full realization of the project, and also of my best wishes for the discharge of his high office.

I likewise met with a significant segment of the Haitian people, and especially of Christians gathered around their bishops and priests. This was mostly within the framework of the great Eucharistic and Marian celebration, and I was very struck by the fervour and the dignity of the prayer, by the vitality of the ecclesial community, by its simple and warm reception, by the seriousness of its commitment. I read in this attitude the confidence of the Haitians in the Church, their good will, their desire for progress, their hope

3. I am aware of the heavy task that devolves on each individual, according to this responsibilities, to ensure the continuance of the human, social and spiritual development. Each family, each profession, each community should apply its share of initiative, of honest and persevering work, to the extent of its power and its means, and should also feel supported by an atmosphere of justice and peace, according to the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity which Your Excellency recalled. The concern of all, as you very happily brought out echoing the new Constitution, is that «each individual discover his role in the national development». I know that those in authority are aware of what is at stake, which is the honour of their office.

4. The Church, as you know, whether in its bishops, its priests, its religious – of Haitian origin or those from other countries who have generously come to assist their brothers – and its laity, will continue to work according to its competence toward this development. Its primary role is to form consciences so as to allow them to deepen their faith, to enlighten and to strengthen their piety, to face up to their personal, family and social responsibilities. It pertains also to the Church to encourage and promote the works that assist people to nourish, instruct, care for themselves better, to be more responsible. In this way the Church responds to its universal mission at the service of man and of his full development. In this task it is sure of being able to encounter the understanding and the support it needs, for the honour of religion and the welfare of the country.

5. This is moreover what the Church would like to accomplish in a spirit of service, throughout the entire world. You mentioned in this regard a few of the great objectives it has at heart: world peace, the development of the less favoured peoples, brotherhood among men, religious, moral and social renewal.

You will henceforth be the close witness of the specific contribution the Holy See endeavours to make toward these aims, even as you yourself echo here the desires and the efforts of your country at the national and international levels.

I am happy for this occasion which is offered me of reiterating my regard and my sympathy for all the Haitian people, and my sincere good wishes to its government Authorities as for you, Mr. Ambassador. I welcome you cordially in this House, I offer you my best wishes for the fulfillment of your high mission, praying God to assist and bless you.

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