



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II

TO H. E. Mrs THERESE STRIGNER SCOTT

AMBASSADOR OF GHANA TO THE HOLY SEE*Monday, 24 March 1986

Your Excellency,

I am pleased to welcome you to the Vatican and to accept from your hands the Letters by which you are accredited as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Ghana. Be assured that I see this act as a factor of stability and continuity in the maintenance of the good relations existing between your country and the Holy See.

The people of Ghana are not strangers to me. I have vivid memories of my visit to your country in 1980 on the occasion of the centenary celebrations of the Church's presence in that part of Africa. I experienced the warmth of your hospitality and I was confirmed in my respect and esteem for the distinctive culture of Africa, which is such that in the great diversity of its expressions it manifests a substantial unity. At the time of my visit I described the essential aspects of African culture as "a vision of the world where the sacred is central, a deep awareness of the link between Creator and nature, a great respect for all life, a sense of family and of community that blossoms into an open and joyful hospitality, reverence for dialogue as a means of settling differences and sharing insights, spontaneity and the joy of living expressed in poetic language, song and dance" .

This essentially spiritual view of man and of his existence in the world is a solid basis upon which the peoples of Africa, and in particular those of your own country, ought to elaborate the values upon which family and social life can thrive for the well-being of all.

In the circumstances of economic and political change and turmoil which today affect the life of nations, it is extremely important that this spiritual outlook which pervades African culture not be lost or subordinated to exclusively material concerns. The value, dignity and rights of the human person should always be the guiding force and the inspiration of political and social activities.

In this context you have referred to the Church's commitment and contribution to the social, economic, educational and medical development of Ghana. In these endeavours the Church truly seeks to be at the service of the human family. Indeed the Church is especially concerned to

defend and sustain the human dignity of the neediest; the poor, the sick, the young and old, the worker and the immigrant. In these fields of service there is ample room for close and fruitful collaboration between the Church and public authorities. It is my ardent hope that in Ghana such collaboration will continue to increase in a climate of mutual trust and understanding.

Again, in the context of the defence of human dignity, you have also made reference to the deplorable system of apartheid which continues to suppress certain fundamental human rights in some parts of Africa. On various occasions I have reiterated the Church's total and convinced repudiation of every form of racial discrimination . While we strongly condemn the inhumanity of apartheid and express solidarity with the victims of the violence it generates, it is also imperative for the Church and the world to support and encourage the initiatives undertaken by the parties involved to bring about a prompt, just and non-violent solution to this vexatious question.

*AAS 78 (1986), p. 1092-1093. *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, vol. IX, 1 pp. 849-851. *L'Attività della Santa Sede* 1986 pp. 250-251. *L'Osservatore Romano* 25.3.1986 p.6. *L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English* n.15 p.20. ©
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