



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. Mr STEVENS ERASMUS MAPUNDA
NEW AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALAWI
TO THE HOLY SEE*Saturday, 28 November 1987***

Mr Ambassador,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Vatican and to receive the Letters accrediting you have conveyed from His ordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Malawi. I thank you for the good wishes you have conveyed from His Excellency Ngwaza Dr H. Kamuzu Banda. I would ask you kindly to extend my warmest greetings to him and to assure him of my prayers for all the people of your country.

As you have pointed out, the Holy See has a special interest in upholding moral and spiritual values. Such values are essential for integral human development and they correspond to the deepest longings of the human heart. The well-being, not only of individuals and of the family as the primary cell of society, but also of nations themselves and, indeed, of all mankind is intimately connected with right conduct in human affairs. A sense of responsibility, solidarity, truthfulness, respect for the legitimate rights and freedoms of others - these are some of the necessary ethical building blocks of a just and harmonious society.

On the other hand the weakening of these values threatens the dignity and rights of persons and erodes the very fabric of society. Very often the tensions that disrupt peace and hinder development in the world are due to individual and collective selfishness, and thus, in the ultimate analysis, they spring from the human heart and from an insufficient commitment to the common good. Hence, people's moral goodness is a major factor in the development of justice and peace. In this the Church has a specific contribution to make. This is an important part of the service she renders to the human family.

At the same time, the Church is far from indifferent to basic and primary human needs. That is why, as you recalled, the Holy See has appealed to the richer nations of the world to help alleviate

the problems faced by developing countries. It also explains the reason for the Church's efforts in your own nation and throughout Africa, to provide health care, education and other services, while she also carries out her principal role of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In this respect I thank you, Mr Ambassador, for your kind words about the contribution that the Church is making to the improvement of the lives of the people of Malawi.

There are many ways in which the political community and the Church can and should collaborate in serving the social body. The Second Vatican Council reminds us that "this service can be more effectively rendered for the good of all, if each (the political community and the Church) works better for wholesome mutual cooperation" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 76).

In this process the Church shows respect for the political freedom and responsibility of citizens and fosters these values among them. In this context, dialogue has a pivotal role to play. It enables people to come to know each other and to discover the values and traditions peculiar to each community and nation. It is capable of opening doors that have been closed by misunderstanding and prejudice. It is a path of moral and spiritual enrichment. And for yourself, as a diplomatic representative, dialogue is one of the primary ways in which you are able to contribute to the progress of our country.

Mr Ambassador, as you assume your new responsibilities, I assure you of the full co-operation of the Holy See. I ask Almighty God to grant you health and happiness in your work and to bless all the people of Malawi with enduring peace.

*AAS 80 (1988), p. 721-722.

Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II, vol. X, 3 pp. 1230-1232.

L'Attività della Santa Sede 1987 pp.975-976.

L'Osservatore Romano 29.11.1987 p.4.

L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English n.50 p.10.

© Copyright 1987 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana