



The Holy See

***DISCOURS DU PAPE JEAN-PAUL II
À S.E. M. ALBERT MBONERANE, NOUVEL AMBASSADEUR
DE LA RÉPUBLIQUE DU BURUNDI PRÈS LE SAINT-SIÈGE
À L'OCCASION DE LA PRÉSENTATION
DES LETTRES DE CRÉANCE* Jeudi 13 janvier 1994***

Mr. Ambassador,

I welcome you here, where I have the pleasure of receiving Your Excellency on the occasion of the presentation of the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Burundi to the Holy See.

This ceremony, which we would like to have taken place in a peaceful atmosphere, is unfortunately tinged by a certain sadness because of the tragic plight of the Burundian people. At the time of my unforgettable Pastoral Visit in September 1990, which enabled me to appreciate the warm hospitality of your compatriots, the seriousness of their reflection and the zeal of the Catholics' faith, I had hoped that the people of Burundi were firmly committed to the path of brotherly reconciliation and unity, to overcoming the obstacles of poverty and to pursuing the work of national development, in keeping with their noble ancestral traditions.

The atrocities of last October arrested this programme, and to use your own words, the "demons of division" seem once again to have gained ground. However, in extending the message which I conveyed to the Prime Minister on the occasion of the funeral of the President of the Republic, I would like once again to invite all the people of Burundi to reconciliation and to mutual trust. I hope they will join forces to rebuild the nation together, to restore the institutional framework, the absence of which has de-stabilized the country, and to make Burundi a State guaranteeing basic freedoms and upholding respect for human rights.

As my special envoy, Cardinal Roger Etchegaray, declared in his homily in the Cathedral of Bujumbura on 24 December, it is now imperative to proclaim a "state of hope" in order to give life and work new meaning, so that security may be established and the exiles may return home,

reassured by the certainty that they will be welcomed in their own land by their brothers and sisters.

Through you, Mr. Ambassador, I would like to address my affectionate greetings to the beloved Catholic community. In particular, I would like to thank my brothers in the Episcopate together with my personal representative in Bujumbura, for their efforts to quell the violence and to encourage a return to order. I wholeheartedly urge Catholics to contribute wholeheartedly to pulling down the walls of hatred and to putting into practice the command of fraternal love which Christ gave us. May Christian communities appear as the mature fruit of a true reconciliation!

I can assure you, Mr. Ambassador, that now as in the past, the members of the Catholic Church wish to make their contribution to building a just and fraternal society in Burundi. Under the guidance of their Bishops, they are keen to create an atmosphere of truth, justice, solidarity, reconciliation and brotherhood that will enable the nation to progress harmoniously. Through her own institutions, the Catholic Church hopes to continue to work for the promotion of the human person, to be devoted to the service of health care and education, to support the family institution at the service of life. She wishes to co-operate in all these sectors with the believers of other Christian denominations or other religions.

As you begin your mission, Mr. Ambassador, I offer you my best wishes. I assure you that you will always find here a ready welcome and cordial understanding from these who work with me.

I fervently invoke on Your Excellency and on all the families of Burundi, especially those which are suffering, the support and life-giving presence of the God of Peace.

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