



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. Mrs Agnes Yahan Aggrey-Orleans,
AMBASSADOR OF GHANA TO THE HOLY SEE****

Saturday, 11 January 1997

Your Excellency,

I am pleased to welcome you today as you present the Letters appointing you Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Ghana to the Holy See. My first Pastoral Visit to Africa as Successor of Peter brought me to your country, and the hospitality of the Ghanaian people, as well as the rich variety of their cultures and traditions, remain a vivid recollection. I thank President Jerry John Rawlings for his greetings and I renew the assurance of my prayers for the well-being and prosperity of your nation.

Your comments have centred on two important challenges facing our modern world — development and peace. Despite the close attention which these interrelated themes have received in recent decades, there is still much to be done if authentic development and true peace are to be achieved. Political and economic relations between nations and peoples need to be built on a new basis. Self-interest and efforts to reinforce positions of dominance should be resisted, so that developing nations will not be seen as mere sources of raw materials or as markets for finished products, but as true partners in a new and more just international order, as co-workers who have a valuable contribution to make for the good of the entire human family.

At all levels of development — social, economic, political — a strong and unwavering commitment to the inalienable rights and dignity of the human person is required. It is precisely such a commitment that the Holy See seeks to foster and strengthen by its active presence in the field of diplomacy. In fact, the safeguarding of fundamental rights and respect for human dignity are the prerequisites for integral development. The human person must ever remain the focal point of all development.

In my [*Message for the 1981 World Day of Peace*](#), I noted that “peace must be realized in truth; it must be built upon

justice; it must be animated by love; it must be brought to being in freedom. Without a deep and universal respect for freedom, peace will elude man" (*loc. cit.*, 2). The freedom which we are speaking about here, that human freedom which is the foundation of true and lasting peace, is nothing less than freedom to do what is right and just. It is for this reason that moral and spiritual values have an essential place in the political sphere. Indeed, political structures are effective when they truly respond to the needs of the human person and the community. Should these structures disregard this primary finality and become ends in themselves, they run the risk of polarizing society, alienating different segments of the population.

A correct understanding of the human person is necessary if efforts aimed at fostering development and promoting peace are to be successful. The Church has an important contribution to make in this very area: for through her social teaching she seeks to increase moral awareness of the demands of justice and solidarity, demands which are predicated on the incomparable worth and centrality of the human person. Sharing with the people of our time a profound and ardent desire for a life which is just in every way, she does not fail to examine the various aspects of the sort of justice which the life of people and society demands (cf. *Dives in misericordia*, n. 12). In accordance with her own nature and mission, the Church is thus involved in practical efforts aimed at the improvement of society and at responding to concrete human needs. This is the motivation behind her work in the areas of education, health care and social services, all of which she undertakes in faithfulness to her divine Founder, who "came not to be served but to serve" (Mt 20:28). Here I wish to express my gratitude for your words of appreciation of the positive contribution which the Church makes to Ghanaian society.

Your Excellency, during your term as Ghana's representative to the Holy See the various departments of the Roman Curia will do all they can to assist you in the discharge of your duties. I offer my good wishes for the success of your efforts to build further on the positive relations already existing between us, and I pray that almighty God will bestow abundant blessings upon yourself and your fellow citizens.

*Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II, vol. XX, 1 pp. 75-77.

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