



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II
TO THE NEW AMBASSADOR
OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA
TO THE HOLY SEE***

Thursday, 14 December 2000

Mr Ambassador,

It is a pleasure for me to welcome you to the Vatican and to accept the Letters of Credence by which His Excellency President Daniel T. Arap Moi has appointed you Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Kenya to the Holy See. I am grateful for the President's good wishes and ask you kindly to assure him of my continued prayers for the progress, peace and prosperity of your country.

You have referred to the Holy See's efforts to promote justice and peace in the world, and it is precisely this endeavour which characterizes the Holy See's presence in the international community. In fact, the fruitful and friendly relations existing between us are inspired by the shared conviction that the dignity and rights of the human person must be upheld and defended at all times and under all circumstances.

Your presence here today, Mr Ambassador, is a sign of your Government's readiness to work for that justice and peace for which the peoples of Kenya — and all of Africa — so ardently long. A real commitment to these ideals is in fact a necessary prerequisite for authentic development and true progress. Thus I renew today the hope which I expressed five years ago while standing on Kenyan soil: may every citizen of your country, regardless of religion, ethnic background or social class, live in freedom and help to build a society based on unwavering respect for human dignity and human rights (cf. *Address at Departure from Nairobi*, 20 September 1995, 2). This is the only sure path for promoting justice and development, for combatting unemployment, for giving hope to the poor and the suffering, for resolving conflicts through dialogue, and for establishing a true and

lasting solidarity between all sectors of society.

Both in Africa and throughout the world the Catholic Church is deeply committed to the struggle for integral human development, and the Holy See is very much involved in efforts to increase understanding and harmony between peoples and nations. Making world leaders ever more aware of their responsibilities in these areas and of the priorities that they must set for themselves and for their countries' institutions is an essential element in this undertaking. Chief among these priorities is deepening people's understanding of their personal rights and responsibilities. This is not merely a question of making knowledge and information available; it is also a matter of imparting a keen sense of responsibility for the common good, an attitude which prepares the way for enlightened participation in public affairs on the part of all sectors of society. This is the soul of social progress, the key to the future, the necessary element for truly effective programmes of development.

As is made clear by the unresolved and even increasing difficulties being experienced in many parts of Africa, not least of all in your own region of the Continent, progress is not a simple, automatic and limitless process, as though societies were able to advance endlessly towards some sort of perfection (cf. Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 27). While social and political development are necessary for achieving and maintaining peace and security within and among nations, they cannot be authentically attained without respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Each country's good governance and development can only be the result of concerted action, especially in what concerns the defense of human dignity, the protection of human rights and the administration of justice. In the last analysis, all basic problems of justice have as their main cause the fact that the person is not sufficiently respected, taken into consideration or loved for what he or she is. People must learn or learn anew to look at one another, to listen to one another, to walk together (cf. *Address to the Diplomatic Corps*, 16 January 1993, 6).

In this context I wish to express once more my hope that the international community will show an ever greater preparedness to address the imbalances and injustices which are built into the structures of the global economy and which have serious repercussions for the peoples of Africa. One initiative which I have sought to bring before world opinion in this year of the Great Jubilee has been debt relief for countries such as yours; but this cannot be an isolated gesture. It must be accompanied by a more comprehensive reassessment of the ways in which the world economy functions, especially at a time when the forces of globalization are becoming increasingly powerful. The globalization process brings a promise of greater cohesion and prosperity. But there is also a danger that it will aggravate economic imbalances, leaving developing countries like your own still more seriously disadvantaged. I assure you, Mr Ambassador, that the Holy See intends to continue to do all that it can to convince world leaders and institutions that economic globalization must be accompanied and "humanized" by "the globalization of solidarity". Without this it is unlikely that we shall succeed in building a future worthy of humanity.

In all these various undertakings, of course, Kenya's Catholics are eager to lend their support and make their contribution to the nation's life and development. This in fact is part of the spiritual mission which has been entrusted to the Church by her Divine Founder, and in fidelity to this mission she seeks to serve all people, especially those most in need. Their faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ impels Christians to respond to the cry of the uneducated, the sick, the suffering and the marginalized. In cooperation with their fellow citizens, the members of the Catholic community will continue their efforts in the service of the common good, and I thank Your Excellency for your recognition of the work of the Catholic Church in Kenya and of her positive influence on society.

Mr Ambassador, I extend to you my best wishes for your tenure as your nation's representative to the Holy See and assure you of all necessary assistance in fulfilling your high mission. May Almighty God abundantly bless you and your fellow citizens.

**Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II, vol. XXIII, 2 pp. 1118-1121.*

L'Osservatore Romano 15.12. 2000 p.6.

L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly edition in English n. 51/52 p.8.

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