



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER TO THE NEW AMBASSADOR OF MALI TO THE HOLY SEE*

Thursday, 6 December 2001

Mr Ambassador,

1. I am pleased to welcome Your Excellency for the presentation of the Letters accrediting you to the Holy See as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Mali. I thank you for the cordial greetings you have just addressed to me in your name and on behalf of the President of Mali. I should be grateful if you would convey my best wishes to President Alpha Oumar Konaré for his well being and for the fulfillment of his lofty mission at the service of the people of Mali. I ask Almighty God to bless the efforts of all who are committed to building a society founded on the values of justice and peace and which recognizes the rights of all the nation's members.

2. In your address, Mr Ambassador, you emphasized the rewarding and friendly relations that exist between your country and the Holy See. They are based on our common conviction that the fundamental dignity and rights of the human person should be protected and defended at all times and in all circumstances. After the dark days that a few months ago made a deep impression on the conscience of humanity, I would like to acknowledge the constant efforts your nation has made to serve the cause of peace, not only within its boundaries, but also with sustained diplomatic action across the entire African continent. In this perspective, it is right to stress the importance of the meeting of the *Organization for African Unity*, that you hosted in your capital Bamako in November 2000, that dealt with the reduction of the proliferation of small weapons. At a time when your country is resolutely engaged in the process of building a democratic society, I express the wish that setting up and organizing a state of rights will let each person enjoy his prerogatives as a citizen, freely and with respect for a legitimate pluralism. It will also contribute to the common good that presupposes, in particular, a respect for the values and religious traditions of each one that

will contribute to national unity and to the maintenance of peace and harmony among all the members of society.

To introduce and develop a culture of peace is a demanding and noble duty for a nation that identifies with humanity's vocation to acknowledge that it constitutes one family. This duty requires each nation to make courageous decisions, to fight all forms of selfishness whose effects can be noted in the economic and social imbalances and in the absence of trust that often undermine relations of healthy cooperation between individuals and peoples. On this topic, I have often had the opportunity to recall that "there is no true peace without fairness, truth, justice and solidarity.

Failure awaits every plan which would separate two indivisible and interdependent rights: the right to peace and the right to an integral development born of solidarity" (*Message for World Day of Peace 2000*, n. 13). To remedy the serious injustices that keep nations poor, I ask rich countries to support the efforts of the poorest ones in particular by helping set up the appropriate structures for development and the means of formation. Indeed, developing countries must be helped for their own sake and not for the particular interests of nations to which they would be indebted. It would be possible to implement this globalization of solidarity that I appeal for and which represents a great opportunity, not only for the economic growth of humanity, but also for its cultural and moral development.

3. The Catholic Church, for her part, is eager to play an active role in the life of the people of Mali, in the hope of making a specific contribution to fostering the good of the national community. In the name of the mission of Gospel service that she received from Jesus Christ, she wants to encourage any process that will lead to the total fulfilment of persons and peoples, in conformity with their vocation. The Church has always believed that education is a unique place for the healthy growth of the young generations, helping to open them to the values of love, respect, freedom, justice and solidarity. In the context of education, as in that of health care or social assistance, the Catholic Church will continue to strive for the common good, together with all the members of civil society.

This prospect implies that she possess the material means and recognition that will allow her to carry out her mission without discrimination among those entrusted to her care. To enable young people who benefit from this integral education to take part actively in society's progress towards a more fraternal life, it is necessary to stand up for the family, an essential value of African culture, which "has vital and organic links with society, since it is its foundation and nourishes it continually through its role of service to life: it is from the family that citizens come to birth and it is within the family that they find the first school of the social virtues that are the animating principle of the existence and development of society itself" (Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, n. 42). Lastly, it is very much to be hoped that this integral education will enable Christians and Muslims to establish relations of mutual respect, trust and friendship, for a fruitful cooperation in harmony and reciprocal esteem. May they find the necessary strength in the true

heritage of their religious traditions in order to collaborate in the development of their country in solidarity!

4. Permit me, Mr Ambassador, through you to greet warmly the bishops, priests, men and women religious, catechists and Catholic faithful of your country. I encourage them to put their hope increasingly in Christ, to bear a living witness to the love of God among their brothers and sisters. I invite them to work enthusiastically, through dialogue and involvement in the city's life to be rid of the causes of division, to build a society that is more and more equitable and united.

5. At the time that you are beginning your mission to the Holy See, I offer you my cordial wishes for the noble task that awaits you. Let me assure you that you will find the attentive and understanding welcome here, with my collaborators, and I cordially invoke an abundance of divine Blessings upon you, your family and staff, upon the people of Mali and upon the authorities who preside over the destiny of your nation.

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