



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO H.E. PRINCESS ELIZABETH BAGAYA
AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA TO THE HOLY SEE****

*Consistory Hall
Thursday, 14 December 2006*

Your Excellency,

I am pleased to welcome you to the Vatican and to accept the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Uganda to the Holy See. I thank you for the greetings which you have conveyed on behalf of His Excellency Mr Yoweri Museveni, President of the Republic, and I gladly reciprocate with good wishes and the assurance of my prayers for His Excellency and the people of Uganda.

Your country, situated at the heart of the Great Lakes Region, shares many of the characteristics present in African culture. Some of these splendid values come clearly to mind: the respect which should be given to every human life from conception to natural death, the place of the family as the corner-stone of society, and an inspiring sense of the sacred.

I have followed closely the challenges facing the African Continent, some of which have presented themselves with varying degrees of urgency in your homeland. Sadly these events often arise from human pride and violence. As the people of your nation aspire to a future of peaceful stability, your Government is faced with the pressing obligation of responding decisively to the needs of all who suffer the tragic effects of prolonged violence in the North. The international community is impelled to give proper attention to the grave humanitarian crisis affecting more than a million people in the region. Many Ugandans and some international organizations have been working diligently, often at great risk to their own lives, to assist these displaced and marginalized people, but the situation calls for increasing cooperation in order to create an environment of security and stability.

Uganda can make progress towards authentic integral development by remaining faithful to her own roots. In this regard, your nation must continue to strive for a balanced blend of the old and the new, always fostering respect for the family and the wider community, material progress and cultural enrichment, together with individual freedom and national solidarity. One of the keys to ensuring the success of a democracy lies in participation in, and encouragement of sincere and fruitful dialogue. The mutual exchange of opinions and ideas is not always easy. Good governance, however, requires that those with different opinions be heard, respected and involved in the decision-making process. It is only in such an atmosphere of understanding and cooperation that true and lasting progress can be realized and sustained. In this context, it is my hope that those in authority will do all in their power to ensure that the Church remains an important partner in this exchange of ideas by assigning her the juridical guarantees that recognize her freedom to carry out the divine mission entrusted to her. Her desire is to promote hope and courage through the proclamation of the Good News to all God's people (cf. *Ecclesia in Africa*, 14).

I would reassure you that the Catholic Church is sincerely committed to assisting all efforts to promote peace. As the Second Vatican Council reminded us, it is the Church's duty to foster and elevate all that is true, all that is good, and all that is beautiful in the human community by consolidating peace among men for the glory of God (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 76). In this regard, the Holy See is hopeful that the Second Summit of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, which begins today, will raise hopes for a future of security based on dialogue and cooperation. In the various conflicts some agreements have been reached and a number of those under arms have returned home, availing themselves of the new climate of reconciliation. I remain confident that this regional momentum will be sustained and that those in authority will do all in their power to see that the expectations raised in the hearts of so many are brought to fulfilment. I pray that Almighty God will grant renewed wisdom and courage to those in positions of responsibility so that all parties will return to dialogue and the quest for peaceful and lasting solutions.

It is encouraging to hear of the progress your country is making in promoting long-term development through the reduction of poverty and the extension of educational opportunities. The high proportion of young people in your population gives vitality and renewed hope to the nation. Collaboration between the Church and civil society has yielded many blessings in Uganda, above all in education, in health-care and in the struggle against HIV/Aids, where statistics confirm the practical value of a policy of prevention based on continence and the promotion of faithfulness in marriage. It is my sincere hope that the people of Uganda will continue to draw increasing benefits from this support.

Your Excellency, I assure you of my prayers for the success of your mission as your country's representative to the Holy See. You may be certain that the various departments of the Roman Curia will be ready to assist you. I invoke Almighty God's abundant blessings upon you and upon the beloved people of Uganda.

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