



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO H.E. MRS. DOMITILLE BARANCIRA
AMBASSADOR OF BURUNDI TO THE HOLY SEE***

Friday, 1st June 2007

Madam Ambassador,

I am pleased to receive you, Your Excellency, at this Audience for the presentation of the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Burundi to the Holy See.

I was touched by the cordial words you addressed to me and I warmly thank you. They testify to the interest shown by your Country's Authorities in the development of relations of esteem and agreement between Burundi and the Apostolic See. Through you, I am pleased to express to H.E. Mr Pierre Nkurunziza, President of the Republic of Burundi, my good wishes for himself and for the accomplishment of his lofty mission at the service of the Nation.

I also greet with affection all your Country's inhabitants, remembering the suffering of the population which has been harshly tried by so many years of war whose consequences are still felt today, as well as being regularly afflicted by drought and floods.

I would like to assure them of my constant concern for them. I pray God to support all Burundians in the courageous and generous commitment which motivates them to build together an increasingly fraternal and supportive society that may also be, more broadly, a concrete sign and vigorous appeal for the consolidation of peace and security in the Great Lakes region.

As you emphasize, the Catholic Church has not ceased to express her closeness to the Burundian People, sharing in their joys and hardships and even paying a heavy price in the cause of peace and reconciliation in the Country.

I am moved by the tribute you pay to Archbishop Michael A. Courtney, the Apostolic Nuncio who was assassinated on 29 December 2003 after meeting the religious, political and military Authorities in the Diocese of Bururi.

As I remember this good and faithful Archbishop, a servant of peace and brotherhood among peoples, I express the wish that the Country's Authorities will spare no efforts to ensure that light is shed on his assassination and that those responsible are prosecuted.

Among the means suggested for the consolidation of peace in your Country, the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission is envisaged. In order not to disappoint the great expectations for peace of this Commission, all must prepare for this sensitive and essential task of purification with the greatest possible care and with an open mind and heart.

Thus, in a patient and painstaking search for the truth, it will be possible for each one to contribute to healing the wounds inflicted by the war with the balm of forgiveness that does not exclude justice, and to set the Country on the path of peace and integral development.

The Church in Burundi is ready to take an active part in this process, especially through the celebration of diocesan Synods, dialogue and participation in the joint action to sensitize the population at all levels to the important issues at stake and contribute actively to establishing lasting peace and sincere reconciliation. If these tasks are not done properly it will certainly be difficult for any of the people to look to the future with hope.

Other encouraging signs are the common desire to work actively for peace and reconciliation. In particular, it would be appropriate to mention the negotiations under way between the Government and the Palipehutu-FNL, with a view to the implementation of the Cease-Fire Agreement signed on 7 September 2006.

I am delighted with this desire for dialogue and invite all the parties present to honour their commitments and above all to have the courage to work for peace, without which there can be no true development.

Your Excellency, you mentioned the commitment of all Burundians to the consolidation of social peace and the relaunching of the economy. In this complex long-term effort, which aims at the material and moral reconstruction of the Country, Burundi is not alone and cannot be left on its own. The international community, moreover, has not failed to offer its moral aid and financial support.

The roundtable of donors for development, which was held in Bujumbura last 24 and 25 May, eloquently showed the commitment of the delegations present to collecting the necessary funds to guarantee the financing of the programme of priority actions, and in particular the improvement of

good governance, peace and security, the promotion of lasting, equitable economic development and the development of human capital as well as the fight against AIDS.

One should also rejoice at Burundi's entry into the East African Community and in the choice of your Country as the headquarters of the Executive Secretariat of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

This mark of confidence requires Burundi to reciprocate the honour by showing an exemplary sense of responsibility in the adoption and implementation of the *Pact on Peace, Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region*, signed in Nairobi last 15 December.

I am certain that everything will be done to ensure that the commitments made are respected and that all Burundians can look to the future with confidence and become protagonists of their own development.

If all the Country's inhabitants are called to contribute, each according to his potential, to the economic and social recovery of Burundi, it is right that they should share in its results. To enable the most vulnerable sectors of society and those most exposed to violence, organized crime and disease - I am thinking in particular of children, women, refugees - to benefit fully from the fruits of development, it is especially necessary that public officials have access to an ever greater and more authentic awareness of moral values.

These universal values, such as a sense of the common good, fraternal welcome to foreigners, respect for the dignity of every human life, solidarity, to which the Catholic Church grants much importance, constitute a precious heritage that must become a source of hope in the future and the base on which it is possible to build a social life with sound foundations.

Through you, I greet the members of the Catholic community of Burundi and its Bishops. I encourage them to share the hope that is in their hearts. The local Catholic Church and the Holy See, whose active contribution to the Country's development no longer needs to be demonstrated, especially in the areas of education, health care and peace, desires Church-State relations in a secular Republic like Burundi always to be marked by mutual respect and active collaboration for the good of the entire Country.

May the faithful, united with their Pastors and in sincere collaboration with their compatriots, work passionately for their Country's development in solidarity!

As you begin your mission, Madam Ambassador, I offer you my best wishes for the noble task that awaits you. You may rest assured that you will always find here among my collaborators the attentive and understanding welcome you may need. Upon you, Your Excellency, your family, the Burundian People and their leaders, I invoke an abundance of divine Blessings.

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