



The Holy See

*ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO H.E. MR. AHMED HAMID ELFAKI HAMID
AMBASSADOR OF SUDAN TO THE HOLY SEE**

Friday, 1st June 2007

Mr Ambassador,

It is with pleasure that I welcome you, Your Excellency, on the occasion of the presentation of the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Sudan to the Holy See.

I express my gratitude to you for conveying to me the greetings from H.E. President Omer Hassan Ahmad El-Bashir, from the Government and from the People of Sudan. In accepting their good wishes for peace and brotherhood, I reciprocate by invoking Almighty God so that he may illuminate consciences and support the projects of all those in your Country who wish to advance courageously and with determination on the path of consolidating lasting peace and brotherhood, lived to the full among the different members of society.

In my [*Urbi et Orbi Message for Easter 2007*](#), I wished to voice the cries of despair uttered by all the people who, in many countries of the world, regardless of their ethnic or religious origin, suffer from the absence of peace, are subjected to the thousand faces of violence, contempt for life, violation of their most basic rights, exploitation in all its forms and the absence of freedom and security (cf. [*Message*](#), 8 April 2007; *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition [*ORE*], 11 April, p. 6).

The anxieties I mentioned on that occasion, as you emphasized, Mr Ambassador, concur with the concern expressed by the Authorities of your Country and the International Community, especially with regard to the dramatic situation in the Darfur Region that has been drawn out since 2003, taking its toll throughout this region.

In this lethal conflict, which primarily affects the civil populations, it is common knowledge that no viable solution to achieve peace founded on justice can be implemented by the force of arms.

On the contrary, it is necessary to pass through the process of dialogue and negotiation with a view to reaching a political solution to the conflict which respects cultural, ethnic and religious minorities.

To put an end to a situation of crisis, it is never too late to make the necessary and sometimes restrictive decisions with courage, on condition that all parties are sincerely and resolutely committed to resolving it and that declarations of principle are accompanied by constructive steps, especially regarding the urgent humanitarian measures to be implemented.

I therefore appeal to all who have responsibility in this area to persevere in their efforts and to make the indispensable decisions.

The various Accords you mention as well as the recent Agreement of Reconciliation, signed by Sudan and Chad under the aegis of Saudi Arabia, which involves the parties in cooperation with the African Union and the United Nations for the stabilization of Darfur and the neighbouring Region of Chad, are positive appeals to stop strategies of confrontation in order to identify feasible solutions and sources of reliable support.

Thus, the peace and stability desired by all will become reality - I am thinking in particular of the peace process under way in the south of the Country - with beneficial effects at the national, continental and global levels.

Mr Ambassador, you recalled that peace is a gift of Almighty God, the God-Creator of all people and all things, from whom derives the unity of the human family.

The aspiration to peace is anchored in the depths of every person's heart and everyone must feel increasingly responsible for bringing it into being, watching to ensure that it is rooted in justice, bears fruits of reconciliation and contributes to the integral development of all of the nation's members without exception.

Thus, peace is also a challenge that your Country with its wealth of cultural multiplicity, ethnic diversity and the co-existence of various religions must face. If the national diversity is seen positively, as a stroke of good fortune, it will be able to make an effective contribution to establishing peace and security in the Country, to encouraging the integration of all the communities present in the territory and the integral development of the people - as well as enabling them to express their differences in a frank and sincere dialogue -, and to serving the common good.

Lastly, peace appears as a task to accomplish and a service to carry out for the people. It behooves the State Authorities in particular to actively oversee, in the heart of the Nation, the ways in which this diversity is expressed, sparing no effort to increase fraternal relations among

the members of the national community, to banish all forms of discrimination and the supremacy of one group over another, and to guarantee respect for minorities and their rights.

Peace will thus come to be seen "not as the mere absence of war, but as a harmonious coexistence of individual citizens within a society governed by justice, one in which the good is also achieved, to the extent possible, for each of them" (*Message for the World Day of Peace 2006*, 8 December 2005, n. 6; *ORE*, 21 December, p. 6).

If all are to be able to foster fraternal and sincere relations and build a fairer and more equitable society, the contribution of different religious traditions present in your Country, together with their rich patrimony of human, moral and spiritual values, has an essential importance.

Building peace implies the conversion of hearts. Thus, it seems to me necessary that "the relations of trust which have developed between Christians and Muslims over several years will not only continue, but will develop further in a spirit of sincere and respectful dialogue, based on ever more authentic reciprocal knowledge which, with joy, recognizes the religious values that we have in common and, with loyalty, respects the differences" (*Discourse to Representatives of Muslim Communities*, 25 September 2006; *ORE*, 27 September, p. 2).

To live this specific mission at the service of the good of the entire national community in a way that is ever more reassuring, it is fundamental that individuals and communities be free to profess their faith and practice their religion publicly.

Experience shows that the faculty to act in accordance with a clear conscience, the freedom to honestly seek the truth above all things and the possibility to live according to one's belief with respect for other religious traditions, are indispensable prerequisites for lasting and fruitful development and a peaceful, dignified life for citizens.

Mr Ambassador, you acknowledge the specific mission of the Catholic communities and of their Bishops, in communion with the Successor of Peter, "to establish peace and understanding between nations and to affirm spiritual values within peoples".

I would like, through you, to express my affection and spiritual closeness to the Bishops' Conference and to all the Catholics of Sudan. Through them I also acknowledge the activity of all the Catholic institutions, national or international, who work in the Country at the service of the integral development of all the nation's inhabitants without distinction.

I am aware of the courage of Catholics, and I share in the suffering which numerous years of fighting oblige them to endure. Their faith requires them to work day after day, with people of good will, against all forms of intolerance and exclusion which can have devastating consequences on social unity.

I do not doubt that the possibility of being consulted and more actively involved in working out feasible solutions for building peace will facilitate their specific mission among the Sudanese People!

Thanks to Christ, who is their steadfast hope in the ordeals their Country is experiencing, they will be daring and generous peacemakers, together with all their compatriots.

At the time when you are beginning your mission to the Holy See, I offer you my best wishes. You may rest assured that you will always find here an attentive welcome and cordial understanding from my collaborators.

With all my heart, I invoke an abundance of Blessings from the Most High upon you, Your Excellency, upon your loved ones, upon the leaders of your Nation and upon the entire Sudanese People.

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