



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II

TO H.E. Mr WILLIE A. GIVENS

AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA

TO THE HOLY SEE* *Monday, 1 June 1987* Mr Ambassador, I am pleased to welcome Your Excellency as you present the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Liberia to the Holy See. I acknowledge with gratitude the good wishes which you have conveyed to me from your President, and I would ask you in turn to assure him of my prayers for the peace and progress of all the citizens of your country. On this occasion I recall with satisfaction the cooperation and understanding that have characterized the diplomatic relations between the Holy See and Liberia over the years, and I trust that your mission will serve to strengthen ever more the already existing bonds of friendship. As you have stated, the presence of the Church in Liberia dates from the outset of your nation's history. Beginning with the activity of the first missionaries who preached the Gospel among your people, the Church, in the words of the Second Vatican Council, has sought to serve "as a leaven and as a kind of soul" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 40) in the challenging task of building the nation on principles of justice and respect for the human rights of all. The Council also says of the Church in society that "through her individual members and her whole community, she believes she can contribute greatly towards making the family of man and its history more human" (Cfr. *Ibid.*). In this respect there are many areas of necessary and ever more effective collaboration between the Church and the State. I note your reference to the contribution being made by the Church in your country in the area of education. I am pleased that the Catholic schools of Liberia enjoy a reputation for excellence and that they are helping to make the Christian Gospel better known and accepted. In dedicating herself to providing a quality education, the Church "offers her services to all peoples by way of promoting the full development of the human person, for the welfare of earthly society and the building of a world fashioned more humanly" (Cfr. *Gravissimum Educationis*, 3). I take this opportunity to express once again the Church's dedication to work for the welfare of society. To quote the words of the Second Vatican Council, this welfare "consists chiefly in the protection of the rights, and in the performance of the duties, of the human person" (*Dignitatis Humanae*, 6). And as you will agree, "the protection and promotion of the inviolable rights of man ranks among the essential duties of government" (*Ibid.*). It is with this in mind that I reiterate the Church's concern that in every country respect for the human rights and democratic freedoms of all citizens should be properly respected. Such respect for the dignity and welfare of every individual is best

safeguarded by a public administration guided by honest concern for the common good. Similarly, the inviolable rights of the individual are promoted by ever closer cooperation between all the sectors of society, including the members of religious bodies. Thus the moral foundations of a social progress that is truly complete and at the service of man are firmly secured. Mr Ambassador, I encourage your Government in its efforts to further good relations with all the peace-loving nations of the world. The Holy See's own work for world peace is based upon the Church's conviction of the equality and dignity of every human person formed in the image and likeness of God. This common dignity demands that we live in harmony, that we not only respect one another but that we constantly work for one another's good. In my [Message this year for the celebration of the World Day of Peace](#), I reflected upon the important realities of solidarity and development as keys to peace. Addressing the whole human family, I said: "My hope is that this Message may be an occasion for each one to deepen his or her commitment to the oneness of the human family in solidarity. May it be a spur encouraging us all to seek the true good of all our brothers and sisters in an integral development that fosters all values of the human person in society". This is precisely a vital element of the diplomatic work with which you have been entrusted in the service of your country. As you take up your duties, Mr Ambassador, I assure you of my prayers for the successful and happy fulfilment of your mission. The Holy See is always ready to assist you in the accomplishment of your responsibilities. Upon Your Excellency and the President, Government and people of Liberia I invoke God's abundant blessings.

*AAS 79 (1987), p.1503-1505.

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