



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER

POPE JOHN PAUL II

***TO H.E. Mr MALALA-ZO RAOLISON RANDRIANJANOA RAMAHATAFANDRY,
NEW AMBASSADOR TO THE HOLY SEE FROM MADAGASCAR****

Thursday, 28 May 1998

Mr Ambassador,

1. Welcome to the Vatican, where I have the pleasure to receive you for the presentation of the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Madagascar to the Holy See.

Thank you for conveying the greetings of His Excellency President Didier Ratsiraka. I would be grateful if you would kindly express my best wishes to him for his person and for the fulfilment of his important mission of leading the nation on the road to prosperity and harmony among all its members. I also extend my cordial greetings to the Malagasy people and their leaders, and I pray that God will let them see the success of their efforts to establish a society based on respect for life and on relations of solidarity, the true *fihavanana* which constitutes the wealth of your culture, for the sake of harmonious development.

2. You have told me of your country's commitment to progress resolutely towards the strengthening of a State of law and democracy by observing the fundamental rights of all its citizens. The governance of nations must be based on respect for laws that safeguard the rights and define the duties of individuals. Indeed, we know that constraints on the free participation of each person in the decisions governing a society's life often lead to conflicts whose consequences can imperil a nation's future. Moreover, the duty of solidarity between the various members of society should become an ever greater priority: the management of the common patrimony, based on justice and honesty, must seek to provide for the needs of all, enabling them to lead a dignified and respected life.

In your address, you also stressed the important place family values have in Malagasy culture. It is the State's task to support and protect the family by introducing a social, economic and educational policy which enables it to fulfil all its obligations in a truly human way, especially with regard to children, for the family unit is a primary and vital reality for

society as a whole. As I recalled in the Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, "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" (n. 42).

When, all too often, the world subjects the earth's resources to its will without restraint, it is also important to remember that human dignity and the flourishing of society cannot fully develop, as you yourself stressed, except in a healthy and protected environment that preserves the overall balance of nature, which must not be harmed in any way. In fact, there is a duty to respect the precious gift God has made to the human race, so that it can progress harmoniously and collaborate with his work of creation for the sake of the common good. It is also a serious responsibility towards the generations to come.

3. In a spirit of dialogue and co-operation with people of goodwill, the Catholic Church in Madagascar intends to share fully, in her own specific role, in building a prosperous and fraternal nation. Christ's love, to which she wants to bear witness in the heart of humanity, invites her to be concerned for all people, giving priority to the weakest and the suffering. Through her words and effective efforts, the Church wishes to protect man from all forms of exploitation, constantly recalling the need for the integral development of the person and of a society based on human and spiritual values. Through her social teaching, she also wishes to help form consciences in their search for the truth about man, so that they can respond to the urgent needs and challenges resulting from the profound and rapid changes society is undergoing.

4. Mr Ambassador, allow me, through you, to greet the Bishops and members of the Catholic community of Madagascar, whose warm hospitality I had the pleasure of experiencing. In this second year of preparation for the Great Jubilee dedicated to the Holy Spirit, I encourage them to bear ever more intense witness to Christian hope in the face of global developments and the situation of each human person, in "a daily commitment to transform reality in order to make it correspond to God's plan" (*Tertio millennio adveniente*, n. 46).

5. As you begin your mission to the Holy See, I offer you my best wishes. Be assured that you will always receive an attentive welcome here and cordial understanding from those who work with me.

I wholeheartedly invoke an abundance of divine blessings on Your Excellency, on the Malagasy people and on their leaders.

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