



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE NEW AMBASSADOR OF MADAGASCAR
TO THE HOLY SEE***

Friday, 13 December 2002

Mr Ambassador,

1. With great pleasure I welcome Your Excellency today for the presentation of the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Madagascar to the Holy See, remembering your father who had this same mission.

I appreciate the courteous words you addressed to me. They witness to the esteem of your country for the mission of the Catholic Church. I also thank you for the cordial greeting you have conveyed to me from H.E. Mr Marc Ravalomana, the President of the Republic of Madagascar. Please be so kind as to express in turn my respectful wishes for his lofty mission at the service of his fellow-citizens. I also greet with affection the Malagasy people who in the midst of the vicissitudes of their nation's history, have kept up their courage in trials and their patience in adversity.

2. You recall, Mr Ambassador, the line of conduct that the highest authorities of State intend to follow in guiding the welfare of the nation, endeavouring to make stronger the bonds of its unity.

The *Fahamasinana*, that aims at associating all Madagascans in building a society founded on justice and peace, will bear fruit if it relies on the moral and spiritual values that constitute the wealth of Malagasy culture. To build democracy with determination presupposes courageous choices, especially regarding the moralization of political life, the defence of public freedoms and the participation of all citizens in the exercise of the *res publica* (government). Moreover transparency and truth in the administration of national affairs are indispensable conditions for the lasting development of any society. This also requires economic and social approaches that place

the human being at the heart of social development, and protect the interests of the poorest, encouraging equity between individuals and between the different members of the nation. At the time when your country lives a new page in its history and on the eve of the elections, I ask God to sustain the efforts of those who work to open ways of dialogue and national reconciliation, with concern for the common good, so that the country may be deeply committed to the path of good government and the respect for human rights.

3. To succeed in achieving these noble objectives, every nation is called to develop a culture of peace. This means combating selfishness in all the forms whose devastating effects are felt in socio-economic imbalances and in the spread of poverty. The search for peace also implies being attentive to the principle of equity in social life. It means banning with extreme firmness anything that relates to corruption since in falsifying relations of confidence, it impairs relations of loyal cooperation among people, institutions and human communities. At all the levels of public life, as the bishops of the country have recently recalled, it is right to purify hearts and consciences by being determined to stamp out behaviour that establishes a deceitful violence that only increases the gap between the rich and the poor and destabilizes all society. It is then that an authentic culture of justice and peace can develop, sustained by international cooperation which "cannot be reduced to aid and assistance.... Rather, it must express a concrete and tangible commitment to solidarity which makes the poor the agents of their own development" (*Message for World Day of Peace 2000*, n. 17; *ORE*, 15 December 1999, p. 8).

4. Today your country must face many challenges. The Catholic Church, in collaboration with the other religious denominations present on the territory, intends to make a specific contribution to the promotion of the good of the national community, in discerning and encouraging what enables the human person to live and grow in conformity with his vocation. She hopes to take part in the life of society, since she is never indifferent to the destiny of human people and communities, nor to the dangers that threaten them.

The love of Christ, Saviour of every man and of the whole of man, prompts her to suggest to the young generations, in particular through her educational institutions and in fidelity to Madagascar's noble traditional values, the human and spiritual means that will enable them to take their full place in the construction of a strong, peaceful and supportive society. Indeed, it is important to sensitize youth to the meaning of effort and honesty, to the spirit of reconciliation and sharing, to a proper respect for possessions and persons, to the equitable sharing of riches and responsibilities, as well as to the constant concern to preserve the environment and natural resources. I hope that they will be given the means to keep on hoping and to pursue this noble mission with enthusiasm; it is likewise important to defend the cause of the family, in which young people have their first experience of the moral and social virtues, "which are the animating principle of the existence and development of society itself" (Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, n. 42).

5. Mr Ambassador, through you I would like to greet the bishops, who were recently involved in

fighting vigorously for justice and against corruption. I also greet all the members of the Catholic Church in Madagascar. In this season of preparation for Christmas, when all humanity is invited to welcome Christ, the Prince of Peace, I encourage them to be for all their compatriots, by their active presence in all the classes of society, living witnesses of truth and sharing, who contribute to spreading the spirit of *fihavanana*, a value so dear to the traditional Malagasy culture.

6. At the moment when your mission to the Apostolic See officially begins, Mr Ambassador, I offer you my cordial wishes for the noble task that awaits you. You may rest assured that you will always find here with my collaborators the availability and attentive welcome which you may need. I wholeheartedly invoke God's Blessings upon you, Your Excellency, upon your family, upon the leaders of the nation and upon all the people of Madagascar.

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