



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO HIS EXCELLENCY Mr CHARLES BORROMÉE TODJINOU
NEW AMBASSADOR OF BENIN TO THE HOLY SEE***

Friday, 29 May 2009

Mr Ambassador,

I am pleased to welcome you to the Vatican at the time when you are presenting the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Benin to the Holy See. I express my gratitude to you for your kind works and for the cordial message you have conveyed to me from H.E. Mr Boni Yayi, President of the Republic. To reciprocate, recalling his welcome visit to me in the Vatican, I should be grateful to you if you would kindly express to him my gratitude and the assurance of my cordial good wishes for the entire nation, that it may progress courageously on the paths of human and spiritual development.

As you highlighted in your address, Mr Ambassador, the current world crisis risks jeopardizing the praiseworthy development efforts of numerous countries. It is therefore more necessary than ever that all the members of the nation work together at the service of the common good. This demands from this very moment the establishment of an authentic democracy, founded on a correct concept of the human person. In recent years your country has courageously set out on this path, with the support of the Catholic Church in particular and of other religious elements. The development of this democratization process is a guarantee of the country's social peace, stability and unity if it is based on the dignity of every person, respect for human rights and for the "common good", accepted as the purpose and guiding criterion for political life (cf. *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, n. 407). In this perspective, the establishment of a sincere dialogue between people and Institutions is of the utmost importance.

I would also like to acknowledge the engagement of your country in the consolidation of peace and stability in various parts of the world. This token of solidarity with sorely-tried nations, especially in

Africa, makes a substantial contribution to the promotion of the values of good, truth and justice, and to the safeguard of innocent lives. The search for peace and reconciliation is a grave responsibility for those who are in charge of guiding the nations, since violence, that is never a solution to problems, is an unacceptable attack on human dignity.

Your presence here this morning, Mr Ambassador, testifies to the good relations that exist between Benin and the Holy See. In this framework, allow me to recall here Cardinal Bernardin Gantin's eminent achievements, as he gave a special impetus to the life of the Catholic community in your country and whose personality is still respected and admired by all the Beninese. May his generous commitment to the Church, to Benin and to Africa continue to be for many of your fellow-citizens an example of self-denial and the gift of self for others!

As you emphasized, Your Excellency, Benin is a land of acceptance, hospitality and tolerance. Implanted among the Beninese people for many years, the Catholic Church pursues the work she has undertaken to serve the nation, thus making her own contribution to the development of the country in numerous sectors, especially in education, health care and human advancement. She thereby intends to associate herself with the national effort so that each person and likewise each family may live a dignified life. The Church's participation in social life is an important part of her mission. In fact, since she hopes to proclaim and to actualize the Gospel in the heart of social relations, the Church cannot be indifferent to the realities that constitute human life. I therefore rejoice to know that the Church's good works are appreciated by the population and that they also enjoy the Authorities' support.

The development of harmonious relations between Catholics and the members of other religions, which in your country usually consist of reciprocal understanding, must also be encouraged. Cultural or religious diversities must pave the way to an enrichment in the quality of society as a whole. As I have had the opportunity to say recently, "Together we must show, by our mutual respect and solidarity, that we consider ourselves members of one family: the family that God has loved and gathered together from the creation of the world to the end of human history" (*Address to the participants in the Catholic-Muslim Forum*, 6 November 2008). It is therefore desirable that an ever truer and clearer mutual knowledge allow the expression of understanding on the fundamental values, especially on those that concern the protection and promotion of life and of the family, as well as cooperation in everything that furthers the common good.

Mr Ambassador, may I be permitted to greet through you the Catholic community in your country, united around its Bishops. I hope that Catholics will sow hope and peace among the people of Benin. I ask them to collaborate with everyone to build a society that is more and more supportive and fraternal.

Mr Ambassador, today, when you are beginning your mission to the Apostolic See, I extend to you my best wishes for success and assure you that you will always find with my collaborators

understanding and support in order to carry it out successfully.

I wholeheartedly invoke upon you, upon your family, upon your collaborators and upon all the people of Benin and their leaders, an abundance of Blessings from the Almighty.

**L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English n. 23 p. 5.*

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