



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO H.E. MR DAVID DOUGLAS HAMADZIRIPI,
AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZIMBABWE
TO THE HOLY SEE***

Thursday, 16 June 2005

Your Excellency,

As I accept the Letters accrediting you as the Ambassador and Minister Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Zimbabwe, I offer you a warm welcome to the Vatican. I ask you kindly to convey to President Mugabe my greetings and prayerful good wishes for your nation and all its people.

With the elections of 31 March 2005, Zimbabwe made a new beginning in confronting the grave social problems which have affected the nation in recent years. It is my fervent hope that the elections will not only contribute to the immediate goals of pacification and economic recovery, but will also lead to the *moral rebuilding of society and the consolidation of a democratic order* committed to enacting policies dictated by genuine concern for the common good and the integral development of each individual and every social group. At this important hour in the history of your country, particular concern must be shown for the poor, the disenfranchised and the young, who have been most affected by the political and economic instability and who demand genuine reforms aimed at meeting their basic needs and opening before them a future of hope. The great challenge of national reconciliation also demands that while past injustices be recognized and addressed, every effort must be made in the future to act with justice and respect for the dignity and rights of others.

In this regard, I can only second the observations made by Zimbabwe's Bishops on the eve of the recent elections about the urgent need for "*a responsible and accountable leadership*" marked by truthfulness, a spirit of service to others, honest management of public goods, commitment to the rule of law and the promotion of the right and duty of all citizens to participate in the life of society.

The noble goal of attaining the common good through an ordered social life can only be attained if political leaders are devoted to ensuring the welfare of individuals and groups in a spirit of integrity and fairness. Looking towards Africa's future role in the international community, my predecessor, Pope John Paul II, insisted that "a better world will come about only if it is built on the foundation of sound ethical and spiritual principles" (*Ecclesia in Africa*, 114).

I appreciate Your Excellency's kind reference to the religious, educational and charitable apostolate of the Church in your country, and I assure you of the desire of the nation's Catholics to support the legitimate aspirations of the people of Zimbabwe. Through her network of educational institutions, hospitals, dispensaries and orphanages the Church stands at the service of people of all religions. She seeks to offer *a specific contribution to the future of the nation* by educating people in the practical skills and the spiritual values which will serve as the foundation for social renewal. For her part, the Church asks only for the freedom to carry out *her proper mission*, which serves the coming of God's Kingdom through her prophetic witness to the Gospel and her inculcation of its moral teaching. The Church thus works for the building of a harmonious and just society, while at the same time respecting and encouraging the freedom and responsibility of citizens to participate in the political process and in the pursuit of the common good.

Your Excellency, as you undertake your mission of representing the Republic of Zimbabwe to the Holy See, I offer my good wishes for the success of your work. Be assured that you may always count on the offices of the Roman Curia to assist and support you in the fulfilment of your high responsibilities. Upon you and your family, and upon all your fellow-citizens, I cordially invoke the abundant blessings of Almighty God.

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