



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO H.E. Mr PETER HITJITEVI KATJAVIVI
NEW AMBASSADOR
OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA TO THE HOLY SEE***

*Clementine Hall
Thursday, 13 December 2007*

Your Excellency,

It is a pleasure for me to welcome you to the Vatican as I accept the letters by which you are appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Namibia to the Holy See. I thank you for the greetings and good wishes which you have expressed on behalf of your President, Mr. Hifikepunye Pohamba, and I would ask that you kindly convey to him and to the Namibian people my own cordial greetings and the assurance of my prayers for their peace and well-being.

Having attained independence in 1990, Namibia is one of the world's youngest nations. Yet the history of her people stretches back much further, encompassing periods of great trial and suffering as well as moments of remarkable success. Your Excellency has kindly expressed appreciation for the Church's steadfast presence throughout this history. Arriving in the territory in the latter half of the nineteenth century, Catholic missionaries, in addition to establishing places of worship, also founded numerous schools and hospitals, many of which are still serving the Namibian people today. The work of these institutions gives witness to the "duty of charity" which has always been at the heart of the Church's mission (cf. *Deus Caritas Est*, 32).

As you have indicated, authentic love for one's neighbour must be expressed in tangible ways. Yet in the public realm, it is often difficult to ascertain precisely what will be most conducive to the good of our brothers and sisters. Such discernment calls for a long-range vision. This has been the impetus for the many initiatives your country has undertaken to enhance the quality of life of all

Namibians by concentrating in a special way on authentic human development. Indeed, the quality of human life cannot be measured solely in terms of consumable goods. The Church shares the conviction that societies must embrace man's "full range of material needs" as well as his "intellectual, moral, spiritual, and religious life" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 64). I pray that as Namibia implements its strategies for economic and social development, it keeps its sights set on an integral vision of man in his bodily, spiritual and social dimensions.

Namibia's vision for the future recognizes the urgent need to bring the troubling spread of infectious disease to a halt. The tragic toll which HIV/AIDS has had in Southern Africa has been particularly alarming. In this regard, I assure the people of your country that the Church will continue to assist those who suffer from AIDS and to support their families. The Church's contribution to the goal of eradicating AIDS from society cannot but draw its inspiration from the Christian conception of human love and sexuality. The understanding of marriage as the total, reciprocal and exclusive communion of love between a man and a woman not only accords with the plan of the Creator, it prompts the most effective behaviours for preventing the sexual transmission of disease: namely, abstinence before marriage and fidelity within marriage. It is for this reason that the Church dedicates no less energy to education and catechesis than she does to health care and corporal works of mercy. Mr. Ambassador, I encourage the leaders of your nation to legislate in a way that promotes the life of the family, which must always be held as sacred and most fundamental for a stable society.

Human health also depends on a harmonious relationship with nature, which has been entrusted to man's intelligent dominion. Namibia's Constitution is one of the first to make explicit mention of the grave responsibility to protect the environment and to use its resources wisely. I join you in drawing the global community's attention to the importance of respecting nature as a common good destined for the enjoyment of the whole human family (cf. *Centesimus Annus*, 37). To this end, Namibia has made a concerted effort towards agrarian reform. Yet the road has not been easy. Above all, policies in this area must always uphold the basic right of the hungry to their daily portion of bread (cf. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 42). Therefore, I warmly encourage everyone involved in these initiatives to persevere. By effectively administering titles, opening access to credit, and utilizing the latest advances in science and technology (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 69), I am confident that your nation will achieve a more equitable distribution of land and reap a more abundant harvest of the earth's fruits in the years ahead.

I assure you, Mr. Ambassador, that the Church will continue to stand with your fellow countrymen as they strive to assist one another in accordance with the divine command to love one's neighbour (cf. *Mt* 22: 39). As you take on your responsibilities, I am confident that you will find the various departments of the Holy See ready to assist you in carrying out your mission. Upon you, your family, the Namibian people and their leaders, I invoke an abundance of divine blessings.

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