



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO H.E. Mr NYINE S. BITAHWA
NEW AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA
TO THE HOLY SEE***

Thursday, 29 May 2008

Your Excellency,

I am pleased to welcome you to the Vatican and to accept the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Uganda to the Holy See. I appreciate the greetings which you have conveyed on behalf of His Excellency Mr Yoweri Museveni, President of the Republic, and I gladly reciprocate with my own good wishes and the assurance of my prayers for His Excellency and all the people of Uganda.

The Holy See establishes diplomatic relations with States with a view to achieving mutual cooperation for the spiritual and material good of their populations. In this regard, the efforts made in your country in the struggle against poverty and its underlying causes are most encouraging. Human development, through the availability of employment, suitable housing and the extension of educational opportunities, is an indispensable factor in the economic and social progress of a nation. Much has been achieved in Uganda in the fields of education, development and health care, especially in the struggle against HIV/AIDS with dedicated attention to those affected and a successful policy of prevention based on continence and the promotion of faithfulness in marriage. True to her commitment to preach love of God and neighbour, the Catholic Church will continue to cooperate with civil authorities, especially in these areas which help to better the human condition.

Mr Ambassador, you have spoken of your people's joy at seeing the culmination of efforts to formalize peace agreements and to bring to a conclusion the long years of warfare marked by cruel and senseless violence. The Church, in view of her call to enlighten consciences, cannot but express her joy at what has been achieved, and her earnest hope that conditions of full security

will soon prevail, allowing all displaced people to return to their homes and resume a peaceful and productive existence. In this regard, I wish to convey the Holy See's appreciation to all who have raised their voice against violence and hatred, and to all who have contributed to a negotiated search for peace. I encourage all involved to take part generously in the task of repair and rebuilding after so many years of turmoil and abandonment. That this task is taking place amid fears of a world-wide food shortage and rising prices should be a further stimulus to dedication and perseverance in consolidating peace, reconciliation and reconstruction. I trust that the population's strong desire for peace will inspire the Government to continue to carry out its regional responsibilities and to do all that is in its power to ensure stability and reconciliation throughout the region, where lasting peace will only be possible when all parties involved adhere to international agreements and commit themselves to full respect for national borders. Much has to be done in these years but new hope has arisen for the people of Northern Uganda and their neighbours. May Almighty God assist them in their efforts to begin life anew.

No nation today is free from the influence of globalization with its benefits and its challenges. This phenomenon facilitates trade opportunities, access to information and the communication of values. Unfortunately, it can also promote superficial lifestyles and attitudes that undermine healthy customs based on moral truth and virtue. Men and women of goodwill in Africa rightly reject destructive outlooks which are associated with greed, corruption and the many forms of personal and social disintegration. Democracy and the rule of law are not nurtured by materialism, individualism and moral relativism but by integrity and mutual confidence, especially when sustained by committed and selfless leaders who are willing to offer their service to their fellow citizens for the building up of the common good. It is my fervent prayer that the genuine benefits of contemporary culture will enrich the existence of all Ugandans in harmony with what is true and healthy in the values that have been transmitted from generation to generation.

In this regard the country you represent, Mr Ambassador, embodies many important characteristics found in African culture, such as: a respectful attitude to parental authority and a religious way of seeing important moments of human existence, promoting deep respect for the dignity of every human life from conception to natural death. This is the rich background in which generations of Africans have been educated and from which the seed of the Christian Gospel has produced abundant fruits. The Catholic Church appreciates this heritage for its own sake and because of its harmonious relationship with fundamental truths of the natural moral order and with basic tenets of the faith. I assure you, Mr Ambassador, that the Church will continue to play her part in the defence and promotion of these principles. She sees it as her mission to consolidate and complement them in the marvellous plenitude of the Gospel.

Your Excellency, I have spoken of topics of essential interest both to State and Church and areas in which undoubtedly cooperation will continue to bear fruit for a better future for all Ugandans. The various departments of the Roman Curia will be happy to assist you in your mission as your country's representative to the Holy See. I am pleased to assure you of my prayers as you begin

your mandate and I invoke Almighty God's abundant blessings upon you and your family, and upon the people of Uganda.

**Insegnamenti IV, 1, 2008, p.888-890.*

L'Osservatore Romano 30.5.2008, p.4.

L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English n. 23 pp. 10, 12.

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