



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO H.E. Mr ELKANAH ODEMBO
NEW AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA
TO THE HOLY SEE***

*Clementine Hall
Thursday, 17 December 2009*

Your Excellency,

I am pleased to welcome you to the Vatican and to accept the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Kenya to the Holy See. I thank you for the greetings which you bring from your President, His Excellency Mwai Kibaki, and I ask you to convey my respectful gratitude to him and to assure him of my continuing prayers for the well-being of all your people.

As you know, the [Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops](#) was held in Rome in October of this year, and some six months earlier I made my first [Apostolic Visit to Africa](#). These are signs of the continuing commitment of the Holy See to maintain and strengthen its cordial relations with the peoples and nations of your continent, and to ensure that the African dimension of the pressing concerns you mention – religious freedom, interreligious dialogue, international peace and justice and all areas of human development – will remain firmly on the agenda of the international community. As I said on my arrival last March, Africa has suffered disproportionately at a time of global food shortages, financial turmoil and disturbing patterns of climate change ([Address at Welcome Ceremony](#), 17 March 2009), and it is essential that attempts to resolve these problems take due account of the needs and rights of the peoples of Africa.

You have spoken of the dark period experienced by Kenya about two years ago, in the aftermath of disputed election results. Let me seize this occasion to assure you again of my heartfelt compassion for all those who suffered injury or bereavement in the course of the violence, and my

earnest hope that the reform agenda on which your Government has embarked may succeed in restoring the peace and stability for which Kenya was justly renowned for many years. Dialogue and popular consent, matched by accountability and transparency, are the hallmarks of a sound and stable democratic government. In pursuing these objectives, the Kenyan authorities will be laying the foundations of a just and peaceful society for a long time to come.

In view of the abundant human and natural resources with which Kenya is blessed, the goal of prosperity for all her citizens ought to lie within her grasp. Naturally, the global economic downturn of the past twelve months has taken its toll, and the Holy See will continue to urge the “pressing moral need for renewed solidarity” between countries at different stages of development (*Caritas in Veritate*, 49), in the interests of economic justice. Yet the responsibility for striving to overcome poverty must also be shouldered by the societies concerned, which need to give priority to the fight against corruption and the effort to distribute wealth more equitably. By correcting the malfunctions that cause divisions between and within peoples, it should be possible to harness the positive potential of the process of globalization so as to ensure a redistribution of wealth and thereby to “steer the globalization of humanity in relational terms, in terms of communion and the sharing of goods” (*ibid.*, 42).

This is where the local Church offers a most valuable contribution, highlighting the ethical dimension of the issues that present themselves in the life of the nation. I thank you for the appreciation you have expressed of the work of the Catholic community in Kenya in the areas of healthcare, education and human rights, and particularly in promoting initiatives for peace and reconciliation at the time of the post-election crisis. I can assure you that Catholics in Kenya are eager to continue this mission of service to the wider community, especially in the light of the renewed commitment to reconciliation, justice and peace that was the particular focus of the recent Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops. That solemn event was a summons to the Church in Africa to proclaim with joy the good news of her life-giving faith, so as to bring hope to the hearts of all the people of the continent.

Your Excellency, I am confident that the diplomatic mission which you begin today will consolidate the good relations that exist between the Holy See and the Republic of Kenya. In offering you my best wishes for the years ahead, I would like to assure you that the various departments of the Roman Curia are always glad to provide help and support in the fulfilment of your duties. Upon you, your family and all the people of Kenya I cordially invoke God’s abundant blessings.

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