



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II
TO THE AMBASSADOR OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA TO THE HOLY SEE***

Thursday, 27 October 1988

Mr Ambassador,

It is my pleasure to welcome Your Excellency to the Vatican as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to the Holy See. I gladly accept your Letters of Credence and would ask you to convey my gratitude for the cordial greetings and good wishes sent by your President, His Excellency General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida. I reciprocate with the assurance of my prayers for his well-being and for the peace, harmony and prosperity of your nation.

As I welcome you, I note with satisfaction your reference to my pastoral visit to Nigeria in 1982. It was for me a joy on that memorable occasion to experience the warm hospitality of the Nigerian people and to witness their noble human qualities. My visit enabled me to show fraternal solidarity with all the people of your nation as well as to pay tribute to the worthy religious and cultural values which they cherish.

The Church appreciates the importance which your Government attributes to its role of promoting the development of the Nigerian people. It is true that the Church's dedication to development necessarily has an economic dimension exemplified by her efforts to improve living standards, promote employment and reduce all forms of physical poverty, but at the same time the Church does not limit herself to the people's economic advancement. As I stated in my recent Encyclical "[Sollicitudo Rei Socialis](#)": "Although development has a necessary economic dimension, since it must supply the greatest possible number of the world's inhabitants with an availability of goods essential for them 'to be', it is not limited to that dimension. If it is limited to this, then it turns against those whom it is meant to benefit".

Specific attention must be given to the human dimension of development, which is of "measured and orientated according to the reality and vocation of man seen in his totality, namely according

to his interior dimension". Some of the conditions which characterize human development are an increased esteem for the dignity of others, a desire to cooperate for the common good and a willingness to work for peace.

I wish to acknowledge Nigeria's concern for the peace and harmony of all the nations of the world. The peace for which the world yearns depends greatly on the success of efforts to further solidarity and cooperation among all the nations of the world. It also involves harmony between all sectors of the population in each country at the service of true development.

As you are aware, Mr Ambassador, "the protection and promotion of the inviolable rights of man ranks among the essential duties of government". It is a great tragedy that in certain parts of the African continent and elsewhere the fundamental rights of the individual human person are not yet being fully respected, and that there exists the evil of racial discrimination. The Church teaches that "Every type of discrimination, whether social or cultural, whether based on sex, race, colour, social condition, language, or religion is to be overcome and eradicated as contrary to God's intent". In order to bring about the needed changes in a world weakened by various forms of discrimination the Church seeks to secure the inviolable rights of individuals and groups by fostering dialogue and mutual understanding and by actively promoting justice, solidarity and fraternal love.

You have mentioned my remarks to the Nigerian Bishops on the importance of Christians and Muslims working together for peaceful coexistence. As you know, the Church has a deep respect for Muslims, since she believes that the plan of salvation encompasses all who acknowledge the Creator. This respect includes a readiness to cooperate with them for the betterment of humanity, and a commitment to search together for true peace and justice. Similarly, I said in my Message for this year's World Day of Peace: "In the first place, the leaders of religious bodies are obliged to present their teaching without allowing themselves to be conditioned by personal, political or social interests, and in ways that conform to the requirements of peaceful coexistence and respect for the freedom of each individual".

As you begin your mission, I would assure Your Excellency of the full cooperation of the Holy See. It is my hope that the friendly relations which already exist between Nigeria and the Holy See will be further strengthened through your service. Upon yourself and upon the President, Government and people of Nigeria I invoke the abundant blessings of Almighty God.

*AAS 81 (1989), p. 596-598.

Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II, vol. XI, 3 pp. 1350-1352.

L'Attività della Santa Sede 1988 pp. 959-960.

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