



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO TANZANIA, BURUNDI,
RWANDA, AND THE IVORY COAST

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE HEADS OF MISSION AND DIPLOMATIC PERSONNEL
ACCREDITED TO THE GOVERNMENT OF RWANDA***

Friday, 7 September 1990

... Your presence shows the friendly feelings the international community has for the people of Rwanda, whose traditional qualities are acknowledged by all. In a splendid natural setting where they form a cultural community welded together by ancient national structures and speaking a common language, the people of Rwanda show a hospitality, a sense of moderation, and also a will for progress that arouse a widely shared esteem.

It is true that this country has experienced great turmoil over the last decades and its development has come up against the compounded difficulties of the economic situation and natural conditions. Quite recently famine affected certain regions of the country. Soil erosion is a source of anxiety when it comes to assuring the livelihood of a dense population. The exploitation of the mineral resources and other forms of production cannot make up for agricultural shortages.

2. This shows how necessary international solidarity is for this people to achieve the development to which it legitimately aspires. You are understanding and active witnesses of this. Your role as representatives of neighbouring countries, of countries in the developed "North" or of world institutions leads you to understand more deeply the meaning and scope of this solidarity.

Though present on all continents, the Catholic Church does not intend, as you know, to address technical problems directly, but it is her duty to draw unceasingly the attention of those responsible and of all people of good will to the need to build up a true community of peoples. None of them should be left out. Life, health, education and peace are benefits that ought not to be refused to

anyone. All peoples have the right to have their dignity, their culture and the free exercise of their responsibilities respected.

We shall never tire of repeating that mankind is essentially one, and that the poverty and suffering of so many of its members cannot be ignored. Has it not been clearly seen in recent years that the action of specialized organizations, no matter how indispensable it may be, cannot achieve an improvement in the living conditions of those least favoured without the active participation of the beneficiaries and the support of public opinion? People are beginning to realize, it would seem, that the earth is common property and ought to be protected. But are people sufficiently aware that a decent livelihood with some security is a common right, and that it is a common duty to provide it for all. on all the lands of the planet?

Your mission of assuring relations among nations and cooperation with the country whose guests you are leads you to take stock of the urgent need for cross border solidarity. May you bear convincing witness to this when speaking to your fellow countrymen!

3. My journey through three countries in this region of Africa draws my attention to concerns you are quite familiar with and for which I should like to encourage the combined efforts of partners standing close to one another.

First of all, I am thinking of the problems that still exist as a consequence of the displacement of populations as a result of painful conflicts over the last few decades. It is my fervent wish that, through open and honest dialogue, the old wounds may be healed and a just solution may be found to a problem whose complexity is well known to all. And I am truly hopeful that help for Rwanda from friendly countries will be forthcoming, above all to facilitate the sheltering and settlement of persons who still have not found a stable situation in circumstances where they may have the means to live in peace.

From another point of view, it seems that increased regional co operation would contribute to the economic development of the different countries. The concrete realization of projects planned together will sustain the activity of all, whether in the technical fields of transport, the marketing of basic products, credit, or in scientific research programmes adapted to the necessary progress of agricultural production, the fight against diseases and their prevention - to mention but a few particularly urgent examples.

You are well aware of the Church's interest in all that concerns the education of the young. On this point, too, I trust that the countries of this region may have sufficient means at their disposal not only to provide their young people with a basic education, but also to bring the greatest possible number of their sons and daughters to such a level of competence that they may become efficient promoters of development and the bearers of a culture that will continue to live through the fruitful union of the ancestral patrimony and the best contributions from abroad .

In all these spheres it is clear that the free movement of persons in a climate of security and cooperation will foster the progress desired. On the other hand, just as the governments of this region are hoping, the material assistance of the more developed nations and the transfer of scientific and technical information will speed up developments still hampered by poverty.

4. These few observations bring out what are essential convictions for the Catholic Church. Through cooperation and mutual understanding, people should be assured that their rights will be respected and that they will enjoy peace, which is inseparable from justice. As equal partners in dignity, they are justified in hoping that their brothers and sisters throughout the world will provide real assistance, free from any attack on their own spirituality - so close to the heart of Africans - or on the free exercise of their inalienable responsibilities, above all in the family sphere.

Ladies and Gentlemen, on ending my address, I would like to express again my profound esteem for all those who strive to give relations between nations a truly human character, making them conducive to the development of individuals and the social interaction of all.

**L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English n.38 p.6.*