



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE NEW AMBASSADOR
OF ETHIOPIA TO THE HOLY SEE****

Saturday, 28 November 1992

Your Excellency,

I extend a warm welcome to you as I accept the Letters of Credence appointing you Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ethiopia to the Holy See. Please assure His Excellency President Meles Zenawi of my prayerful good wishes for the peace and well-being of the beloved Ethiopian people.

Relations between your country and the Holy See have their antecedents in contacts between the Bishops of Rome and the Christians of Ethiopia extending back into the First Millennium. On the basis of this long-standing relationship, and all the more because the Holy See has been – as you have acknowledged – deeply concerned about the fate of Ethiopia in recent years, I share in the renewed hope of your fellow-citizens as they look to the challenges of the future with determination.

As we rejoice in this prospect, we cannot disregard the enormous obstacles still to be overcome in order that possibilities may be transformed into realities. Apart from their tragic toll in human lives, the years of violence have aggravated ethnic rivalries, uprooted vast sectors of the population, devastated the economy, and left many wounded in body and in spirit. Although the situation is serious, the response cannot be one of disheartened resignation, but rather of courage which stems from confidence in Providence's beneficent plan for the Ethiopian people.

On many occasions I have appealed to the more developed countries to come to the assistance of less advantaged States and communities on your continent. In particular, developing societies

require a share in technical knowledge and organizational skills in order to build up the means of production and the system of communications essential for revitalizing the economy. At the present time it is urgently necessary for the world community to provide Ethiopia and its neighbours with large quantities of material aid, so that they can face immediate emergencies, particularly the one caused by drought. For this aid to be effective, all parties in the region should respect people's fundamental right to receive food and other forms of humanitarian assistance. They must acknowledge the principle that international aid organizations should have access to the zones where those in need are living. I assure you that in this moment of grave shortages the Church's missionary and charitable organizations, which have served Ethiopia so devotedly in the past, will continue to do all they can to help its people.

In your remarks, Your Excellency reaffirmed your Government's pledge to promote a civil order which enshrines the dignity of man and guarantees the rights which are his by nature, among which the right to life and the right to religious freedom are primary. Such goals are essential in achieving the integral development of individuals and societies. A democratic form of government is a decisive step towards this end, since such a system aims at broadening for all citizens the range of their responsible action. Likewise, a democratic system can make it easier for those at whom development initiatives are aimed to play their due role as active partners in such projects (Cf. John Paul II, *Message for the World Day of Peace 1987*, 6).

Earlier this year I alluded to the fact that plans to rebuild society in your country must involve "creating institutions capable of dealing with the diversity of peoples which make it up" (John Paul II, *Address to the Diplomatic Corps to the Holy See*, 11 Jan. 1992) . In so far as cultures are particular expressions of a way of life that is worthy of the human person, people of different cultural heritages can live in concord, for the truth about man is one and forms the basis of peaceful coexistence (Cf. John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 44). Indeed, people of different backgrounds living in the same society can enrich one another through a sharing of the values of their respective traditions in a constructive and peaceful dialogue.

In your address, Your Excellency referred to the efforts of Ethiopian Catholics to come to the aid of their fellow citizens in the trials of the recent past. These deeds of solidarity, I assure you, also express their readiness to contribute to the renewal of national life. Under the guidance of their Bishops, they are eager to commit themselves to the works of development, especially in the fields of education and health-care. They seek to cooperate with their brothers and sisters of other Churches and ecclesial communities and of other religious traditions in "joint action for peace" (John Paul II, *Message for the World Day of Peace 1992*, 7). Above all, the pastors and people of the Catholic Church in Ethiopia wish to be instruments of reconciliation between the members of Ethiopian society who were lately enemies, but who are now called upon to cooperate in fraternal harmony.

Your Excellency, you enter upon your responsibilities at a particularly momentous point in the long

history of the Ethiopian people. I assure you of the willingness of the offices of the Roman Curia to cooperate in ensuring that your mission is a successful one, and I express the hope that relations between the Holy See and your Government will grow ever more cordial. It is my fervent prayer that Almighty God will protect and bless the peoples of Ethiopia.

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