



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II TO
H.E. Mr Pierre-Michel Nguimbi,
NEW AMBASSADOR OF THE CONGO TO THE HOLY SEE****

Thursday, 12 December 1996

Mr Ambassador,

Welcome to the Vatican where I have the pleasure of receiving Your Excellency on the occasion of the presentation of the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of the Congo to the Holy See.

I thank you for conveying the greetings of President Pascal Lissouba, with whom I had the opportunity to converse in this house last 12 November. I would be grateful to you if you would kindly convey to the President my good wishes for his person and for the accomplishment of his task at the service of his people. I also cordially greet the people of the Congo and their leaders, and I pray that God will bless their common efforts to build a more fraternal and prosperous society.

I am pleased to hear what you say of the progress achieved by your country on the ways of development and democracy in national harmony. The nation still faces many difficult challenges. I warmly hope that thanks to the keen sense of solidarity and community life which are innate values of African culture, the obstacles and resistance to the quest for the common good can be rapidly removed. I again express my wishes that the injuries that wounded the country a few years ago are truly healed, and that an atmosphere of social peace and mutual trust is reaffirmed between all those who make up the nation, so that the forthcoming elections can take place in a calm atmosphere. Everyone will benefit from a firmly rooted and peaceful public life where all hostilities are overcome, the convictions of each respected and understanding between groups strengthened by a wise use of the differences due to race, traditions or languages, which will no longer be perceived as a threat. You mentioned, Mr Ambassador, that to administer national affairs well, honest men are required who are first and foremost concerned to serve their people. The Church ardently desires that all who are in leadership positions should always make the good of the individual and the group their main concern. I also hope that better sociopolitical relations between nations will allow the development of international co-operation in order to support the efforts of the most underdeveloped countries in their struggle to guarantee their people's satisfactory living conditions

and effective security. As I said in my Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* “the fruit of solidarity is peace” (n. 138).

Your accreditation as Ambassador, to the Holy See, witnesses to your nation’s esteem and openness to the spiritual dimension. You have frequently mentioned their importance in building up the nation. I have no doubt that the mission you officially begin today will help to deepen the links that unite the Congo and the Apostolic See. The latter, for its part, has desired to promote and encourage them by the recent appointment of a permanent pontifical representative in Brazzaville.

In your courteous address, Mr Ambassador, you mentioned the Church’s role in the education of consciences to the values of love, respect, freedom and justice. The Church’s mission, in fact, is to bring men the message of peace and brotherhood that she received from her Founder. As the recent Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops emphasized, “the Church walks and lives intimately bound in a real sense to their history” (*Ecclesia in Africa*, 68). Catholics cannot neglect the serious questions asked today on the African continent in the area of justice, development and peace. It is their duty to participate to the full in building a just and peaceful society, to the extent of the means available. Thus, in the Congo, Pastors and faithful have made a precious contribution to the cause of democracy and they will not fail, in the future, to collaborate loyally and cordially with those who have the country’s true good at heart, in the struggle for human dignity and the material and spiritual fulfilment of all. Such commitments target the whole man from every aspect, and give a central place to the openness of the individual and societies to the transcendence of God. For the Church, to proclaim Christ is to reveal to man his inalienable dignity, since this dignity comes to him from God himself who created the human person in his image and likeness.

Through you, Mr Ambassador, I would like to greet affectionately the members of the Catholic community in the Congo. I encourage them to live increasingly in fraternal communion and to be true witnesses of Christ’s Gospel among their brothers and sisters. United with their Pastors, may they courageously and generously strive to express the universality of Christ’s love which surpasses the barriers of human solidarity, thereby signifying the unity of the human family freed from its ancient divisions. Christians are called to reach out in love towards every human being, as the Lord teaches them. I invite them also to work zealously with all their compatriots to remove the causes of division and to build up a society ever more prosperous and united.

I offer you my best wishes at the time when you are beginning your mission to the Holy See. Be assured that you will always find here an attentive welcome and cordial understanding in my co-workers.

I cordially invoke an abundance of divine Blessings on Your Excellency and on the people and leaders of the Congo.

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