



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. Mr N'Tji Laïco Traore,
AMBASSADOR OF MALI TO THE HOLY SEE****

Thursday, 12 December 1996

Mr Ambassador,

I am pleased to welcome Your Excellency to the Vatican on the occasion of the presentation of the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Mali to the Holy See.

I was deeply touched by your courteous words and I warmly thank you. I am particularly grateful to you for conveying to me the greetings of Mr Alpha Oumar Konaré, President of the Republic of Mali, whom I had the opportunity to receive here in the Vatican on 15 November last. Through you, I have pleasure in renewing my best wishes for his person and for the accomplishment of his lofty office at the service of the people of Mali. I also greet the members of the Government and I invoke the assistance of God upon the leaders of the nation and upon all your citizens.

In your address, you recalled the Apostolic See's peace-making initiatives among the nations and the development of peoples through active solidarity. In fact, the Catholic Church, acting according to the spirit of Christ, seeks to collaborate with all people of goodwill in an effort to eliminate the differences that lead to serious hostilities between nations or human groups. She thus desires to contribute to building a fraternal and united human society. The creation of the Foundation for the Sahel was designed to show the Holy See's constant concern for the most underprivileged peoples and of its commitment to encourage concrete acts of mutual aid, particularly in this region of Africa.

It gives me pleasure to know what efforts your country is making in the arduous direction of democracy and development. I hope that the ideals of peace, fraternity, mutual understanding and respect for the specificity of all the human and religious communities which make up the nation, continue to inspire more and more those entrusted with guiding the destiny of the Malian people.

The many forms of poverty from which so many people suffer are a permanent moral challenge for States and for the

entire human family in the building of a society that truly conforms to legitimate human aspirations. In the Message I addressed to the Church for World Day for Migrants and Refugees which you had the kindness to mention, I expressed the wish that special attention be paid to those who live in precarious conditions, to those who are forced to seek their living outside their own country, as well as to those who cannot return to their native land and who are leading the difficult life of refugees. These noble causes must enlist greater interest and commitment both in national leaders and in public opinion, so that the life, dignity and fundamental human rights of each person and each human group may be respected.

Your presence here, Mr Ambassador, is a sign that Mali considers spiritual and religious values as deeply necessary for the integral development of man and society. The links between Mali and the Apostolic See cannot fail to be reinforced by them.

Allow me, Mr Ambassador, through you, to greet affectionately Mali's Catholic community. At the beginning of the year, precisely here I had the joy of greeting the members of the Episcopal Conference of Mali, on their *ad limina* visit. This meeting afforded me an opportunity to be close to your compatriots once again. I have observed with satisfaction that the Church enjoys the esteem of the people and their leaders, and that relations between the Catholic community and believers of Islam are for the most part based on friendship and mutual esteem. I know that the Church can count on the benevolence of your country's authorities to promote her social and educational institutions which are at the service of young people and families, regardless of origin or religion.

Motivated by their Christian faith, Catholics wish to spread among their brothers and sisters the values of brotherhood and justice, with respect for the convictions of each. I encourage them to continue to work zealously for their country's development together with all their compatriots who belong to another religious denomination, the followers of Islam and of the traditional religion.

At the time when your mission is beginning, I offer you my best wishes for the noble task that awaits you. I assure you that here with my co-workers you will always find an attentive welcome and cordial understanding.

I wholeheartedly invoke an abundance of Blessings from the Most High on Your Excellency, on the President of the Republic of Mali and on the Malian people and their leaders.

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