



# The Holy See

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***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II  
TO H.E. Mr Manzi Bakuramutsa,  
AMBASSADOR OF RWANDA TO THE HOLY SEE\****

*Thursday, 12 December 1996*

*Mr Ambassador,*

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

I thank you for greeting me on behalf of the Rwandan people, and of His Excellency, the President of the Republic and the Government. In turn, I would like to greet all the members of the Rwandan nation and their leaders, hoping that God will help them establish an increasingly fraternal spirit amongst all, so that each is recognized and accepted for what he is. I particularly desire to express the fatherly love of the Successor of Peter for the persons and families who are living in distress, suffering or bereavement, as well as for those who are still in exile.

In your speech, Mr Ambassador, you have wished to recall the genocide your country experienced two years ago. Since those tragic events, I have made frequent appeals so as to encourage each to seek ways of true reconciliation through dialogue and respect for justice. I rejoice at all the efforts being made today in this regard. It is urgently necessary for all Rwandans to wipe resentment from their hearts and together to seek to rebuild a national community where each will be able to find his place and live in mutual respect. For this, an atmosphere of mutual trust and solidarity must be restored among all the sons and daughters of the Rwandan nation.

The return to their homeland of several hundred thousand of your compatriots during the last few weeks offers a fresh opportunity to restore the people's unity. It is the leaders' task to promote dignified and safe conditions for their acceptance and I hope that all Rwandans will be ready to receive their brothers and sisters with goodwill. The refugees' return must not cause us to forget your many fellow-citizens who are still outside the country and often in tragic situations. I hope effective humanitarian aid structures, which are always necessary, will rapidly be set up.

I hope furthermore that in seeking those responsible for the tragedy your country has suffered, justice and equity will prevail at the trials of those accused of taking part in the genocide. With regard to the Church, as I have already stressed, she cannot as such “be held responsible for the faults of her members who acted against the law of the Gospel; they will be called to account for their acts. All the members of the Church who sinned during the genocide must have the courage to bear the consequences of the deeds they committed against God and against their neighbour” (*Letter to Bishop Ntuhinyurwa*, 14 March 1996; *L’Osservatore Romano* English edition, 27 March 1996, p. 9). Authentic reconciliation between all Rwandans can only be achieved in new-found truth and mutual trust.

As for the Catholic Church, she intends to continue her efforts to establish lasting peace between individuals and communities, in working for the advancement of the human person and to establish a climate of truth, justice and solidarity.

Your presence here, Mr Ambassador, is a sign of the importance your nation attaches to spiritual and Gospel values, if harmony and solidarity among the people, all members of one family, are to be restored. I have no doubt that your mission, which you are officially inaugurating today, will contribute to reinforcing the ties of mutual understanding between Rwanda and the Apostolic See.

Through you, allow me to affectionately greet the Catholic community of Rwanda. With the whole people they suffered the trial; with the whole people they want to commit themselves to working zealously to rebuild and develop the country. I invite all their members not to lose heart but in fidelity to the Baptism they have received, united to their Pastors, may they be able to forgive and may they be generous witnesses to the message of love and mercy bequeathed to them by Christ. Enlightened by the Gospel, may they zealously contribute to building a new society, so that yesterday’s evils may never again be repeated in their country!

I offer you my best wishes for the accomplishment of your task and assure you that you will always find attentive and friendly assistance here with my co-workers.

I fervently invoke the Blessings of the God of peace on Your Excellency, on the leaders of the nation and on all the Rwandan people.

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*\*L’Osservatore Romano. Weekly edition in English 1997 n. 1 p.6.*

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