



# The Holy See

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## **ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II TO THE NEW AMBASSADOR OF CÔTE D'IVOIRE TO THE HOLY SEE\***

*Friday, 20 October 2000*

*Mr Ambassador,*

1. I am pleased to welcome Your Excellency as you present the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire to the Holy See.

I was touched by your courteous words, and I would be grateful if you would express my gratitude to H.E. Robert Gueï, President of the Republic, for the good wishes he has conveyed to me through you. I also extend a very cordial greeting to all the Ivorian people. I hope that at this important moment in their history they will find the necessary strength of mind to pursue, in peace and solidarity with all, their courageous efforts for human and spiritual development.

2. In your address you mentioned the important changes occurring in your country. Since it gained independence, Côte d'Ivoire has shown how attached it is to its long tradition of brotherhood and hospitality. Today, when new problems are challenging the nation, it is advisable for it to preserve this heritage and strengthen its unity. The use of violence to settle differences can only lead to reinforcing divisions and tensions and, in the long term, to mortgaging the organization of society. Peace is a priceless treasure: if it is to be fully maintained, society must be built on the principles of equality, truth, justice and solidarity. It will then be able to guarantee respect for the fundamental human rights of all.

As I have already had the occasion to point out, "failure awaits every plan which would separate two indivisible and interdependent rights: the right to peace and the right to an integral development born of solidarity" (*Message for World Day of Peace 2000*, n. 13). I hope that the efforts made in recent years to improve Ivorians' standard of living will be continued and will allow them all to enjoy the benefits of development. This will require the determination to seek and implement appropriate solutions for meeting the essential needs of individuals and families and thereby guaranteeing an equitable sharing of benefits and responsibilities by sound administration of the common patrimony.

3. The Catholic Church's involvement in the life of human societies belongs to the mission she received from Christ. For her part, she wishes to help in building a united and fraternal national community. Thus she intends to encourage trusting relations and to seek ways of authentic reconciliation among all the country's inhabitants. That is why an atmosphere of dialogue which is respectful of legitimate differences is necessary, for the growth of ethnic or religious hostility is a serious threat to peace and unity and is opposed to God's plan for humanity. For Catholics, "the challenge of dialogue is fundamentally the challenge of transforming relationships between individuals, nations and peoples in religious, political, economic, social and cultural life" (*Ecclesia in Africa*, n. 79).

Moreover, to face the complex problems encountered on the way to the harmonious development of societies, the Church urges public officials to have an ever greater and more genuine awareness of moral values. The people's trust in those who have been called to serve them in public life depends on this. Universal values, such as respect for all human life and its dignity, solidarity, a sense of the common good and the fraternal acceptance of foreigners, are particularly dear to African people. They are a precious heritage which, when accepted and developed, must become a source of hope in the future and permit social life to be built upon solid foundations.

4. Mr Ambassador, on this solemn occasion I would like, through you, to extend an affectionate greeting to the members of Côte d'Ivoire's Catholic community. I ask them to remain united around their Bishops in order to be a leaven of brotherhood and reconciliation in Ivorian society through generous and loyal collaboration with their fellow citizens. May the Jubilee Year encourage them to strengthen their faith in Christ the Saviour and to have a new awareness of the vocation they have received to be Gospel witnesses!

5. As you begin your mission to the Holy See, I offer you my cordial wishes for the noble task that awaits you. I assure you that you will always find caring and cordial assistance here from those who work with me.

I pray for an abundance of divine blessings upon Your Excellency and your family, upon the Ivorian people and upon those who preside over their destiny.

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