



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER
TO THE NEW AMBASSADOR
OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA TO THE HOLY SEE****

Friday, 13 December 2002

Your Excellency,

It is my pleasure to offer you a cordial welcome as you come to the Vatican to present the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Ghana to the Holy See. I appreciate the good wishes which you have brought from His Excellency President John Agyekum Kufuor and the Government, and I gladly reciprocate with the assurance of my prayers for the prosperity and spiritual well-being of the people of your nation.

Speaking of your country's clear commitment to work for the cause of peace, you have mentioned the Holy See's efforts in this same area. Indeed, it is precisely the task of fostering understanding and advancing development and peace among peoples and nations which motivates the Holy See's diplomatic activity. An important aspect of this mission of promoting peace is the task of fostering ever greater awareness of the prime value of solidarity. As the modern phenomenon of globalization makes ever clearer, human society — whether at the national, regional or international levels — is more and more dependent on the basic relationships that people cultivate with one another in ever widening circles. These relationships move from the family to intermediary social groups and on to civil society as a whole, embracing the entire national community of a given country. States in turn enter into relationships with one another, and networks of global interdependence are created, both regional and worldwide.

At the same time, this growing reality of human interaction and interdependence brings to light many inequalities existing between peoples and nations: there is a wide gap between rich and poor countries; within nations there is social imbalance between those living in wealth and those offended in their dignity by a lack of the basic necessities of life. And then there is the damage that

is done to the human and natural environment by the irresponsible use of resources. We are confronted by the sad fact that in certain areas these negative factors have become so acute that some of the poorest countries appear to have reached a point of irreversible decline. For this reason, and compellingly so, the promotion of justice must be at the very heart of the international community's efforts to address these problems.

Here it is a question of actively helping individuals and groups currently suffering exclusion and marginalization to become part of the process of economic and human development. For affluent regions of the world, this means that changes in lifestyles are called for, a change in the models of production and consumption; in developing areas, a change in the established structures of power-sharing, both political and economic, is often required. For the entire human family, it means meeting the many serious challenges posed by armed aggression and violent conflict, realities that involve not only peoples and states but also non-institutional organizations, such as paramilitary and terrorist groups. In the face of such threats, no one can fail to feel the urgent moral duty to work actively towards promoting peace and understanding among peoples, a task which depends in no small part on the establishment — in justice — of a genuine and effective solidarity.

In this same context, we note the tragic consequences that ethnic conflict continues to bring to many regions of the world, including various parts of Africa and even your own country, which unfortunately has not been spared episodes of violence prompted by tribal rivalries. Here too the principle of solidarity can help the different parties to recognize the values that they hold in common, values rooted in our very nature as human persons. Awareness of these shared values provides an intrinsically universal basis for fruitful and constructive dialogue and mutual understanding. This in turn sets the stage for the further democratization of society, and helps to increase the participation of all groups in a representative and juridically safeguarded ordering of public life.

Of course, the Catholic Church will always be a willing partner in the pursuit of the common good, and she will continue to make her specific contribution to the building up of Ghanaian society. In this regard, I am grateful for Your Excellency's words about the Church's positive presence in your country. I would further observe that it is the guarantee of the right to religious freedom — the cornerstone of harmony and stability in any democratic system of government — that in no small part enables Ghana's Catholics to work for the spiritual and material progress of their fellow citizens, promoting unity and fostering effective human brotherhood and solidarity.

Mr Ambassador, I am confident that your mission will serve to strengthen the ties of friendship and cooperation existing between the Republic of Ghana and the Holy See. As you take up your new responsibilities I offer you my prayerful good wishes, and I assure you that the various offices of the Roman Curia will be ready to assist you in the fulfilment of your duties. Upon you and the beloved people of Ghana I cordially invoke the abundant blessings of Almighty God.

**Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II, vol. XXVI/2 p.883-885.*

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