



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. MR ANDERSON KASEBA CHIBWA,
AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA TO THE HOLY SEE***

Thursday, 27 May 2004

Mr Ambassador, I am pleased to welcome you to the Vatican and to accept the Letters of Credence appointing you Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Zambia to the Holy See. I thank you for the greetings which you bring from His Excellency President Mwanawasa and I ask you kindly to convey to him and the Government the assurance of my prayers for the peace and well-being of the Nation. This year your country celebrates the fortieth anniversary of independence, and on this auspicious occasion I repeat the heartfelt good wishes that I expressed fifteen years ago in Lusaka: may all Zambians work together so that your land will be "a place of authentic freedom, brotherhood and mutual solidarity — a nation where your children can grow up and live in dignity and in the freedom worthy of the children of God" (*Arrival Ceremony in Lusaka*, 2 May 1989, No. 2). As your Excellency has noted, the African continent today continues to face many challenges, especially in the areas of development, foreign debt, poverty, human rights and the HIV/AIDS crisis. Indeed, "tensions and conflicts . . . violence, impoverishment and the deterioration of the institutional fabric are plunging entire peoples into despair" (*Address to the Diplomatic Corps*, 12 January 2004, No. 1). Certainly the spirit of mutual solidarity that I referred to above, and about which you yourself have also spoken, is an essential element for responding to these challenges. This is a spirit that is open to dialogue rooted in the deep truth that all people belong to the one human family: "by simply being born into this world, we are of one inheritance and one stock with every other human being" (*Message for the 1987 World Day of Peace*, 1). Far from being a rigid uniformity, this oneness finds expression in the magnificent diversity of the human family, a diversity in which differences of race, culture, language and history are not causes of separation or division but of mutual enrichment and growth. Authentic solidarity represents the sure path for overcoming ethnic animosities, religious intolerance, class divisions and other prejudices that strike at the very heart of human dignity often giving rise to division, enmity, oppression and violence. Since this solidarity is necessarily based on the radical equality of all men and women, any policy that contradicts the basic dignity and human rights of any person or group is to be rejected. On the other hand, initiatives that build open and honest relationships, that forge just alliances, that unite people in cooperation redounding to the benefit of all, are to be encouraged and fostered. Such solidarity does not mean ignoring real linguistic, racial, religious, social or cultural differences, nor does it deny the sometimes great difficulties in overcoming long-standing divisions and injustice; what it does involve is giving pride of place to what is held in common, to those things that unite people in the common quest for peace and progress. We are speaking here, then, of a solidarity that protects and defends the legitimate freedom of each person and the rightful

security of every nation. Without this freedom and security, the very conditions for development are lacking, the necessary ingredients for progress are absent. In other words, the freedom that States must have in order to ensure their growth and development as equal partners in the larger family of nations is dependent on mutual respect among them. Individuals and peoples have the right to an active voice in the decisions that affect them and their future, and they must be free to exercise this right. It is for this reason that seeking economic, military or political superiority at the expense of the rights of others places in jeopardy any prospects for true development or true peace (cf. *Message for the 1987 World Day of Peace*, 6). It is this solidarity, then, that must ever guide economic assistance, political cooperation and even peace-keeping military operations in whatever part of the globe they may occur and between whatever parties they may take place. In this regard, I am pleased to note that Zambia, which is one of the countries on the African continent that has enjoyed political stability and peace since independence, is actively involved in efforts aimed at pacification and reconciliation in Africa — especially in the Great Lakes region — and elsewhere. I also call on the international community to ensure that the aid programmes offered to your country and to other areas of Africa and the world are firmly grounded in a solidarity based on respect for individual freedom and human dignity. Indeed, the Church herself, moved by fidelity to her Divine Master and following his example, reaches out in compassion and love to all men and women in gestures of solidarity. In Zambia she is committed to the betterment of society through her work in the fields of education, health care, charitable activity, and as she seeks to defend human rights, promote moral values and foster the integral development of all people and of the whole person. I thank Your Excellency for your words of appreciation of this ongoing task and for your pledge of cooperation in these very areas. Mr Ambassador, I am certain that your term of service will do much to strengthen the bonds of friendship between your Government and the Holy See. I offer you my best wishes for the success of your mission and I assure you that the various offices of the Roman Curia will always be ready to assist you in fulfilling your lofty duties. Upon yourself and the beloved people of Zambia I cordially invoke the abundant blessings of Almighty

God.

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