



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO H.E. Mr. CHRISTIAN SHEKA KARGBO
NEW AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE
TO THE HOLY SEE**

*Clementine Hall
Thursday, 18 December 2008*

Your Excellency,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Vatican and to receive the Letters of Credence that accredit you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Sierra Leone to the Holy See. I thank you for the courteous greetings and sentiments of good will which you have expressed on behalf of His Excellency, Dr Ernest Bai Koroma, President of the Republic. Please convey to him my gratitude and my personal congratulations and good wishes as he guides the country in his capacity as Head of State. I would also ask you kindly to convey my greetings and good wishes to the members of the Government, the civil authorities and to all your fellow citizens.

Mr Ambassador, your country's return to peace and stability, after many years of conflict, is a great sign of hope for Africa and for the world. Indeed, the recent elections manifested the people's desire for a lasting peace and a solid democracy. The smooth transition from one government to another speaks well of the country's political representatives and their desire to serve their constituencies. It is edifying to see how these events have inaugurated a new chapter in your national history after so many destructive years of violence. I join my hopes with those of others as I pray that the nation will continue along the path of building ever stronger democratic institutions, fostering justice and strengthening the common good.

As your people engage in this delicate mission of nation building, all the more arduous since it must be undertaken against the background of a troubled international economic climate, your Government is rightly emphasizing the priority to revive agriculture and industry in accordance with

the needs of the population and with due respect for the environment and the well-being of future generations. This kind of sustained development, which fosters proper management of the country's resources, can only be effectively achieved in today's globalized economy by concerted cooperation between the private and public sectors, and by open dialogue with other countries and international bodies. If the young people of your country, who are willing to play their part in the progress of the nation, are provided with adequate training and conditions favourable to greater employment opportunities, then the entire nation will benefit. I have no doubt that these initiatives, taken together with the present climate of social stability, will provide an incentive to those wishing to participate in your nation's economic development. For her part, the Catholic Church is confident that the services she provides in health care, social programmes and education will continue to have an increasingly positive impact on the struggle against disease, poverty and underdevelopment. Indeed she sees her mission, as a task intimately associated with the promotion of integral human development (cf. *Ecclesia in Africa*, 68).

Mr Ambassador, your Government has given priority to the sensitive task of healing the moral fibre of society and is convinced that the eradication of corrupt practices in politics is a key issue in this process. Experience has shown that nations can make steady progress only when the majority of their citizens are properly nourished, well educated and respectful towards others. The Church will continue to cooperate in the promotion of a moral climate of hope for the future. Indeed, she is pleased to contribute to this important task especially in the field of education, where new generations of young people are formed so as to become active and responsible members of society. This mission is all the more successful and fulfilling for all involved when educational institutions, inspired by religious values and principles, can enjoy a sufficient and acceptable degree of institutional autonomy and initiative.

Your Excellency, Sierra Leone is blessed to be free from ethnic or religious conflict. Diversity, in language and customs, represents a richness that must be valued. Moreover religion teaches its adherents to consider others as brothers and sisters who are called together in the great human family to build up a common home in peace and cooperation. The Catholic Church in Sierra Leone will continue to encourage mutual understanding and good will among different ethnic and religious groups by opposing prejudice and supporting cooperation (cf. *Ecclesia in Africa*, 109). By engaging in interreligious dialogue, she is confident that the example of a close, respectful relationship among religious leaders will bring believers to consolidate their attitudes of mutual understanding and peaceful cooperation.

Mr Ambassador, these are some of the reflections that the present situation of Sierra Leone has suggested. I wish you every success in your mission and I invite you to avail yourself of the willing cooperation of the Departments of the Roman Curia. May Almighty God bestow upon Your Excellency, your family and the nation you represent, abundant and lasting blessings of well-being and peace!

© Copyright 2008 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana