



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO H.E. MR. JOSEPH TEBAH-KLAH,
NEW AMBASSADOR OF IVORY COAST TO THE HOLY SEE**

Friday, 4 November 2011

Mr Ambassador,

I am pleased to welcome you, Your Excellency, on the occasion of the presentation of the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Ivory Coast to the Holy See. I express my gratitude to you for the cordial greetings you have just addressed to me on behalf of the President of the Republic, H.E. Mr. Alassane Dramane Ouattara. I should be grateful if you would convey my mutual good wishes to him, for him personally and for the fulfilment of his lofty responsibility in service to the nation. Indeed, I pray the Prince of Peace to guide and support him in his endeavour to promote the process for sustainable peace so that all who live in Ivory Coast may lead dignified, calm, serene and happy lives. Through you, I would like to assure my friendship to all the people of Ivory Coast.

You have just recalled, Mr Ambassador, the determination of your country's leaders to spare no effort to achieve national reconciliation and a social unity that is true and solid. To this effect I welcome the creation of the *Dialogue-Truth-Reconciliation Commission*. To this effect may it work with total impartiality! I followed with deep concern the dramatic events of the post-electoral crisis that affected your country. It disrupted social cohesion and led to the divisions that still exist today. For the good of all its inhabitants, may Ivory Coast set out firmly resolved on the path to concord, the promotion of human dignity and the rediscovery of national unity!

Psalm 133 [132]: says: "Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!". It is this path of reconciliation that must be taken, for Africa and the world are watching you with attention and confidence.

The serious crisis that Ivory Coast has just been through has also given rise to grave violations of human rights and the loss of many human lives. This is why I encourage your country to promote every initiative that leads to peace and justice. One must not be afraid to reveal the truth about crimes and about all the violations of people's rights. *Coexistence* will only be possible and harmonious through the quest for truth and justice. This coexistence includes respect for the inalienable rights of the other, who is in fact, another me, as well as recognition of and respect for the sacred nature of every human life. Since all life comes from God it is sacred because of its divine origin. Thus the loss of one human life — whether lowly or important, poor or rich — is always tragic, especially when a human being is responsible for it.

Mr Ambassador, I would like to encourage your country's leaders to engage with determination on a path of transparent and equitable governance and I welcome the code of good conduct of government members that was adopted in the first fortnight of August this year. To achieve the common good, discipline, justice and transparency are required in the management of public affairs. It is up to the politicians to make every effort to ensure that the fair distribution of the country's wealth benefits each one of its citizens.

Like many African countries, Ivory Coast has a diversity of religions and ethnic groups. This is a great wealth. Living together must always be ardently desired and encouraged. As I said in my first Encyclical: "The State may not impose religion, yet it must guarantee religious freedom and harmony between the followers of different religions. For her part, the Church, as the social expression of Christian faith, has a proper independence and is structured on the basis of her faith as a community which the State must recognize. The two spheres are distinct, yet always interrelated" (*Deus Caritas Est*, n. 28). To this effect, the proper management of schools and other educational institutions is indispensable. For what would be the future and development of a nation without strong educational institutions teaching and promoting moral, intellectual, human and spiritual values? I am sure that this educational worksite is one of the priorities for the building of the future Ivory Coast, which I hope will be dynamic, prosperous, peaceful and responsible.

The Church, in her role, shares in the reconstruction effort. She does not wish to replace the State but through her numerous institutions in the educational and health-care fields can bring comfort and care to souls and this support is frequently more necessary than material aid, especially when so many physical and spiritual wounds have yet to be healed. Through you, Your Excellency, I greet all the Bishops and faithful in your beloved country.

Your Excellency, you have now officially begun your mission to the Holy See. Its inauguration, moreover, coincides with the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between your country and the Holy See. I offer you my best wishes for the success of your mission. You may rest assured that you will always find cordial attention and understanding with my collaborators. As I invoke the intercession of the Virgin Mary, I pray the Lord may pour out generous blessings upon you, upon your family and upon your collaborators, as well as upon the

Ivorian leaders and people.

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