



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. Mr ISAAC JEMIDE SAGAY
AMBASSADOR OF NIGERIA TO THE HOLY SEE***

Monday, 1 February 1982

Mr Ambassador,

It is a pleasure to accept the Letters of Credence appointing Your Excellency as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of your country to the Holy See. I warmly welcome you to this new assignment, and while expressing my gratitude for the kind greetings you have conveyed on behalf of the President of Nigeria, I would ask you to reciprocate his cordial good wishes.

Diplomatic relations between the Holy See and Nigeria are a sign of mutual understanding and respect; at the same time they are a pledge of our common desire to work together in friendly collaboration for the betterment of the human person and of society. The Holy See and your nation, each in its own specific field of responsibility, strive to promote the spiritual, moral and cultural elevation of men and women and of the families and communities of which they are a part.

Your presence here today bears witness to your Government's intention to work in harmony with the Holy See. Similarly the Holy See and the Catholic Church in Nigeria more specifically want to contribute to securing a better future for your country. Just as Jesus of Nazareth was a man "who went about doing good", so also the followers of Christ seek to excel in works of charity and justice in their relationships with all their fellow citizens, regardless of creed or any other social distinction. To illustrate this point, permit me to make reference to the educational institutions of the Church in Nigeria. Among other goals, these institutions seek to assist every person in developing his or her unique capabilities and talents, so that each one, having received a solid formation in the various fields of study, may, as a good citizen, contribute to the welfare and further development of the community. They are at the service of the parents, to help them in the exercise of their right to choose the type of education they wish to give their children, in accordance with their moral and

religious principles.

In several weeks, I shall have the great joy of visiting the beloved people of Nigeria. I look forward to this pastoral pilgrimage with great anticipation. It will be an occasion of meeting many of my brothers and sisters in Christ, and of uniting with them to praise and glorify the name of God, our Creator and Redeemer. It will afford me the opportunity to greet the members of other religions, especially those of the Moslem faith, whom the Catholic Church holds in high esteem. I look forward to meeting His Excellency Alhaji Shehu Shagari, the President of Nigeria, together with the other leaders of your nation. I pray that this journey of friendship and faith will deepen the bonds of understanding and brotherhood which already unite us.

I wish Your Excellency success in the new mission which you are undertaking and, for its accomplishment, you may be assured of all necessary assistance on the part of the Holy See.

*AAS 74 (1982), p. 459-460.

Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II, vol.V, 1 pp. 273-274.

L'Attività della Santa Sede 1982 pp. 86-87.

L'Osservatore Romano 2.2.1981 pp.1, 2.

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