



The Holy See

***DISCORSO DI GIOVANNI PAOLO II
A S.E. IL SIGNOR SÉBASTIAN NTAHUGA,
NUOVO AMBASCIATORE DEL BURUNDI PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE****

Venerdì, 18 novembre 1988

Mr. Ambassador,

It is with joy that I welcome Your Excellency to the Vatican as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Burundi to the Holy See.

I thank you for the good wishes which you have conveyed to me from His Excellency Major Pierre Buyoya, President of the Republic of Burundi. I ask you to transmit to him in return my respectful and cordial greetings, assuring him of my prayers for himself, for those who collaborate with him in the responsibility of governing the nation of Burundi and finally for the dear people of Burundi themselves, to whom I express all my affection.

Your presence here as diplomat witnesses to the openness of your country to spiritual and religious values. This gives me great satisfaction, and I do not doubt that your mission, officially inaugurated today, will contribute to strengthening your country's bonds with the Holy See.

You have kindly mentioned the efforts of the Apostolic See to encourage initiatives which respond to the profound concerns of every human being and which seek to establish greater freedom, justice and peace. Your country shares the desire to promote these same ideals through the unanimous commitment of its sons and its daughters, with respect for the dignity and the rights of every individual. I know the grave difficulties your nation has had in the past – and, alas, again recently – but I know also that the people of Burundi and their rulers have made the firm decision to take every possible measure to overcome them. Certainly, your people lacks neither the resources nor the moral energy required for a fraternal reconciliation and a common participation of all the citizens in the building of a peaceful future. In this long-term work, you can count on the

encouragement and the support of the Church, in particular of the Holy See, and also, I sincerely hope, on the sympathy and assistance of the international community.

Permit me to take the occasion of this meeting to express through you a particularly affectionate greeting to the Catholic community of Burundi, which is still young but already so energetic and rich in promise. Its contribution to the work of promoting the integral development of your people has been, and still is, remarkable. It is with great satisfaction that I have learned of the decisions by which the new government not only has re-established the Church in her rights, in the full liberty of her worship and pastoral activity, but also has resumed a dialogue and collaboration which will benefit the whole country. I do not need to tell you again, Mr Ambassador, that the Catholics of Burundi are desirous to spend themselves generously in the cause of national development, and that they are prepared to contribute their constructive, loyal and disinterested cooperation. Under the direction of their bishops, they will be eager to pursue, with renewed fervour, their contribution to unity and to harmonious human development, especially in solidarity with those who are suffering and in the struggle against poverty. With full respect for life, they wish to build ever more solidly the family structures, which remain the necessary foundations for the construction of a nation. They will be particularly careful to educate the younger generations to the great values of justice, peace and brotherhood, which have their origins in the Gospel.

Following its traditional wisdom, may Burundi become more and more a country of acceptance, dialogue and mutual assistance: a country which lives in peace and which contributes to peace in the African continent and in the entire community of nations!

As you begin your mission, I offer you my best wishes for the happy accomplishment of your task. Be assured that you will always find here a kind reception and cordial understanding.

I invoke the abundance of divine Blessings on Your Excellency, on the President of the Republic, the Government and the people of Burundi.

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