



The Holy See

DISCORSO DI GIOVANNI PAOLO II
A S.E. IL SIGNOR AGUINALDO LISBOA RAMOS,
NUOVO AMBASCIATORE DI CAPO VERDE PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE*

Venerdì, 17 marzo 1989

Mr. Ambassador,

1. Welcome to the Vatican for this occasion, when I have the pleasure to receive Your Excellency as you present the Letters appointing you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Cape Verde to the Holy See. I very much appreciated my beloved Cape Verdean people's noble sentiments which you have communicated to me and, in particular, the best wishes and greetings you brought me on behalf of His Excellency, the President of the Republic, Mr. Aristides Pereira. In thanking you for the greetings that you have communicated to me, especially those of His Excellency the President of your country, I want to assure Your Excellency of the consideration and goodwill with which you will always be welcomed in the exercise of the sublime mission entrusted to you. As regards the noble dispositions with which you take on this mission, in accordance with the traditions of the people of Cape Verde, I hope that they may become concrete in the deepening of our existing good relations, in a context of respect, dialogue, and religious liberty.

2. I could not but notice the reference you made to this Apostolic See's constant proclamation of the dignity and freedom of every human person and the rights that derive from them, as well as your allusions to the efforts to promote a spirit of tolerance and reconciliation between peoples, with a view to a more just and fraternal world. Your Excellency also made reference to the commitment that your country has sought to follow with regard to these ideal ends, which present themselves to the entire human family with an ethical character. Your presence here gives witness to the esteem and the aspirations which the people of Cape Verde, with its great Catholic majority, nourish concerning these values of the human, moral and spiritual order, and their longing for a

society founded upon these values.

3. Happily, a growing consciousness of the dignity of every human being can be seen in the world today. Every person, in fact, beyond the ethnic, cultural, and socio-economic characteristics that may distinguish him, has within himself a transcendental dimension that goes beyond the limits of systems and ideologies, and puts him on the highest and noblest level of creation, above all human works. Man is created in the image and likeness of God, and is therefore deserving of the highest respect, to be expressed in general norms and consequent attitudes.

A society that organizes itself for progress, with the participation and betterment of its own citizens, cannot fail to reflect in its institutions and its programmes and services the truth of the inviolable dignity of man himself, and safeguard the rights that flow from it, to an equal degree for all. In that way what is fundamental and indispensable so that all may recognize, assume, and realize their greatness and worth will be assured; the way is paved for the establishment or strengthening of just and proper social relations; and a solid basis is provided on which to construct the desired integral development of man.

4. Your Excellency also referred to the challenges that your young nation has to face and the efforts that they will demand to achieve better living conditions for all your citizens. An authentic development of man and society is the work of patient application; and it necessarily requires, at all the stages and levels that lead to it, the ever broader, freer, and more conscientious participation of all interested parties. Respect for their values, recognition of their real needs, and the satisfaction of their legitimate desires are the paths that will lead your citizens to see and be convinced of their responsibility to play a leading role in their own development and to take steps progressively to achieve it.

The spirit of initiative, aligned with the harmonization of aims and the coordination of efforts of which all feel the need, is an important factor in the process of building a just, peaceful, and ordered society. Favoring this spirit of initiative generally results in participation and enterprises that better correspond to the needs of the population. The self-realization of every individual within society, through access to education, culture and the free circulation of information, can become a direct contribution to the true development of a nation.

5. At the same time, we know that any plan of development that aims only at the economic dimension will end up by reducing and enslaving man even more, instead of raising or freeing him. On this point, the Church, "an expert in humanity", has an experience that derives from her mission to evangelize all peoples: it has led her to elaborate a body of social teaching, which she presents as a contribution that may lead us to a just and comprehensive vision of development itself. This cannot but reach to the cultural, transcendent and religious dimensions of the human person and society. Without it, no one may realize himself fully, nor may society structure itself so as to guarantee with any stability the people's freedom and the necessary conditions for justice

and peace.

6. The Church, with her own religious mission, in fidelity to Christ and at the integral service of man, in proclaiming the Gospel seeks only to contribute to the progressive humanization of the conditions of life and interpersonal relations in society. Wherever she takes root, she seeks to raise the effect of education in her members – and help all people of good will – to become more just, brotherly, and sensitive to the needs of their neighbours; in this way, she cannot fail to take and manage initiatives of a charitable, educational, cultural and artistic order. She strives to inculcate moral values which inspire and give direction to behaviour that ennoble man and give dignity to societies; she never ceases to point out the ways of dialogue in order to eliminate tensions and settle disputes. At the same time, she constantly promotes the causes of justice and peace, on the national level as well as on the international level, she makes her voice heard, in a particular way, on behalf of the most needy individuals and peoples, calling for solidarity, as she has already done and again wants to do today on behalf of your nation.

7. The people of Cape Verde, with its great Catholic majority, wish that there as well the Church may continue to carry out her mission in caring for her children; that she may cooperate in the integral development of the people of Cape Verde; and recognizing the services provided in the past by the Church in the field of education, they hope that she may be able to continue to give moral and religious education to children and young people, which she does by seeking to impart to them the message of the Gospel and encouraging them to translate the high ideals proposed to them into actions and initiatives which are useful to society. This cannot but favour the great cause of the development of the whole man and of all mankind, on behalf of whom it is necessary to join all our forces, to strengthen the spirit of collaboration, to make our common commitment more effective.

As Your Excellency officially begins the exercise of your office, I sincerely hope that the carrying out of this duty may bring you many peaceful joys. I assure you that you can count on us for the understanding and support which are our goal and which you have the right to expect. And as I entrust you to communicate my best wishes to the President of the Republic, I implore the favour and blessings of Almighty God upon you, Your Excellency, and upon my dear Cape Verdean people and their authorities.

**L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English* n. 20 p. 10.

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana