



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS DAVID M. DLAMINI,
NEW AMBASSADOR OF THE KINGDOM OF SWAZILAND
TO THE HOLY SEE****

28 May 1998

Your Royal Highness, On the occasion of the presentation of the Letters of Credence by which His Majesty King Mswati III appoints you Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of Swaziland to the Holy See, I welcome you to the Vatican. I thank you for the kind words of greeting which you bring from your Sovereign; with a clear recollection of my visit to your country some years ago I cordially reciprocate and would ask you to convey my own good wishes to His Majesty and to all the Swazi people. As you have remarked, the Kingdom of Swaziland and the Holy See enjoy bonds of friendship and cooperation which are made ever stronger by the goals which we share in our common work for peace and well-being at all levels of society. Our meeting today affords us the opportunity to reflect together on some of the concerns which unite us as we strive to foster ever greater understanding and collaboration. In fact, the sole purpose of the Holy See's efforts in the area of international affairs is the building of a more just and humane world, established on the firm foundation of respect for human dignity and human rights. There can be no doubt that, if this objective is to be attained, the international community must commit itself to a real and effective solidarity with all peoples, both in promoting the new possibilities for human development now emerging and in overcoming the threats to peace that are ever present. Looking to your own continent, we can identify certain challenges that international solidarity must meet in order to safeguard integral human development in Africa as well as to ensure the political, economic and social well-being of the world at large. Among the most pressing concerns is the need to put an end to armed conflicts, to provide food for the hungry and to care for the multitude of refugees. Singly, each of these problems is itself a source of great suffering; but they can be rightly considered together, for each is both a cause and an effect of the others. In Africa, hunger has often been the result of social disintegration caused by conflict and violence. And among the victims of war and famine are those forced to abandon their homes and seek shelter elsewhere, with the extensive dispersal and scattering of men, women and children throughout Africa. During these last years of the twentieth century, reliable statistics speak of six million refugees and another sixteen million persons displaced within their own countries. The net result is more wars, more starvation and more refugees; and so the vicious cycle continues, with devastating

effects. Those who are concerned for Africa's welfare, and for the welfare of other regions of the globe where similar tragedies are taking place, must spare no effort to provide speedy relief to the victims of war, famine and displacement. Everyone, including national leaders and directors of international organizations, must work together to find ways to stop these evils from spreading and indeed to bring them to an end. It is widely accepted that violence must give way to dialogue, that food must never be used as a tool of negotiation, and that the distribution of humanitarian aid must be unimpeded and unconditional. Unfortunately, moving from statements of principle to concrete plans of action is not always easy, and it is precisely here that the Holy See has repeatedly called on the international community to act decisively and in effective solidarity to help those who are truly in need. While this appeal is made to the international community as a whole, a particular call for solidarity is also addressed to the countries of Africa itself. The nations of Africa must not rely on outside assistance for everything; they have many men and women with all the requisite human and intellectual aptitudes to meet the challenges of our time. As I said to the Diplomatic Corps earlier this year: in Africa, "more 'African' solidarity is needed to support countries in difficulty, and also to avoid discriminatory measures or sanctions being imposed on them" (*Speech to Diplomatic Corps*, 10 January 1998, No. 4). Cooperation in the analysis and evaluation of political options, reciprocal agreement to ban arms trafficking, active participation in programmes promoting peace and reconciliation: these are all ways of increasing African credibility in the eyes of the rest of the world and will encourage other countries to increase assistance and to be more respectful of the sovereignty of the nations involved. It is this same concept of solidarity which inspires the Catholic Church in her commitment to humanitarian projects. Christian charity prompts the active involvement of Swazi Catholics, although they are only a small minority among their fellow citizens, in the work of advancing human development in their own country, especially through the Church's activity in the fields of education, healthcare and social services. I thank you for your words of appreciation of the Church's commitment in these spheres, and I am confident that, with the legal guarantee of religious freedom in Swaziland, the Catholic community will be able to continue to obey freely the Lord's command to preach the Good News of salvation and to bear witness to it through practical deeds of love and compassion. Your Royal Highness, it is my hope that during the term of your service the friendship and understanding which have marked relations between Kingdom of Swaziland and the Holy See will continue to grow. I assure you of the full cooperation of the Roman Curia in the exercise of your lofty mission, and I invoke upon you and the entire Swazi people the abundant blessings of Almighty

God.

* *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, vol. XXI, 1 p. 1068-1071.

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