



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE PAUL VI
TO THE FIRST AMBASSADOR OF THE IVORY COAST TO THE HOLY SEE****

Monday, 14 May 1971

Mr Ambassador,

It is with keen interest that We welcome this morning, in your person with whom We are already well acquainted, the first Ambassador of the Republic of the Ivory Coast. We thank Your Excellency for the kind words you have just addressed to Us.

Need We point out the esteem the Holy See bears towards your noble country, justly proud of its experience as an independent Republic? We are aware of the important place the Ivory Coast has in the heart of French Africa, in the peaceful competition for development, situated as it is at the crossroads of European and African civilizations. As was highlighted by the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the arrival of the first Catholic missionaries, the Church is firmly implanted among the people of the Ivory Coast, bringing the testimony of its faith, the ardour of its hope and the stimulus of its charity. This implantation has been recently confirmed by the choice of two new native bishops. Yes, the Holy See recognizes the vitality of the sowing of the Christian seed in your country, its originality within the Catholic Church and the hope it represents for the future.

We are grateful to the Authorities of the Republic of the Ivory Coast for the high value they set upon the strengthening and development of moral and spiritual values. Moreover, your people have an instinctive sense of the sacred and of community spirit. Yet no one can ignore the fact that the African soul is subjected to the winds of important economic and social changes, as is the case everywhere else and at an accelerated pace. Therefore, the African soul has to find within itself and from the education it receives the means to face up to the new problems, in peace and dialogue, in solidarity and respect for the dignity of each person and for the common good of all, with hope that results from faith in God, the Master of eternal life. Is it not in this sense that you foster mutual understanding among all the believers, and promote their development and

participation in the work to be done together? Your government has often shown a sympathetic understanding of Our initiatives for peace by gestures which We highly appreciate.

As you know, Our Catholic brothers and sons ask for nothing more than to live their faith and bear witness to it, respecting all men, and to serve as far as they possibly can the social, cultural and spiritual advancement of their fellow-citizens, in solidarity with the other countries of Africa and with the world community.

We entrust to you to thank His Excellency, President Felix Houphouet-Boigny, for the kind sentiments he asked you to convey to Us. We pray the Lord to assist him and all the people of the Ivory Coast along the road of social progress for an harmonious and integral development. At the threshold of your mission to the Holy Sec, We impart to you, dear Mr. Ambassador, Our paternal Apostolic Blessing.

*ORa n.21 p.2.