



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE PAUL VI TO THE AMBASSADOR OF ZAIRE*

Monday, 7 January 1974

Mr. Ambassador,

On this day on which your mission to the Holy See begins, our first words will be to bid you welcome. A frank, cordial welcome, symbolizing the excellent relations which we and our collaborators wish to maintain with you for the whole duration of your stay in Rome.

We must also thank you for your respectful sentiments and for your determination to work at strengthening the bonds between the Holy See and your country, your great country. For Zaire is certainly one of the vastest countries in Africa, possessing undeniable human riches, and with one of the oldest Christian communities. So many reasons to attach a special value to the solution of common problems, the quality of mutual relations, or rather, the strengthening of understanding based on respect and trust. The assurance you give us that you will pursue this aim, in accordance with the instructions of His Excellency General Mobutu Sese Seko, gives us a motive for satisfaction today and allows us to augur the best for all your fellow-countrymen. Transmitting our sentiments of gratitude to the President of the Republic of Zaire for his good wishes, you will kindly inform him also of our deep hope.

A moment ago we mentioned the value we attach to the Christian community of Zaire. Our thought goes more particularly to our dear Catholic Sons of the country, whose zeal and dynamism arouse admiration. As good citizens, they are anxious to work loyally in the national enterprise of development, in all fields. Encouraged by their Bishops, to whom we pay tribute here, they are fully aware of the testimony they can bear: the testimony of a faith which is not imposed on them like a foreign culture, since it comes as a gift of God that touches them in the depths of their heart, the testimony of a community of believers, united with the universal Church, but which, far from denying the human and civil patrimony of its members, is proud, on the contrary, of promoting it

with every means in its power. In freedom, in dialogue with the leaders of the State, it will be possible to progress further in this direction.

Our wishes, therefore, accompany Your Excellency in the exercise of your high functions. They extend to your family, to the Authorities and to all the inhabitants of your country. We invoke God's benefits, his graces and protection on one and all of you.

*ORa n.4 p.2.