



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. MR STEVEN A. LOYATUM
AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA TO THE HOLY SEE***

Thursday, 23 May 1996

Mr Ambassador,

I am pleased to welcome you to the Vatican and to accept the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Kenya to the Holy See. I am grateful for the greetings which you bring from your President, His Excellency Daniel Toroitich arap Moi, and from the Government and people of Kenya, and I ask you kindly to convey my own good wishes, and the assurance of my prayers for the progress, peace and prosperity of your nation.

Your presence here today brings back vivid memories of my Pastoral Visit last year to Nairobi: as you have been so kind to note, it was the third time that Divine Providence had blessed me with the opportunity to visit Kenya. I recall the joy and enthusiasm which abounded, the kindness which was shown to me, and the spiritual vitality of the Catholic faithful. The purpose of that journey was to celebrate the Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops, which reaffirmed the commitment of the Catholic Church to her religious and humanitarian mission in your continent.

As you have pointed out, parts of Africa are, sadly, still involved in situations of conflict and violence which are bringing death and destruction to countless people, including women and children and the most vulnerable members of society. Your own country has been involved and continues to be involved in noteworthy peace-keeping efforts in neighbouring countries affected by conflicts and civil wars. Moreover, in the present world order African nations are struggling to organize themselves on more solid economic and social foundations. The international community has a duty to support these efforts, conscious of the fact that effective international solidarity is essential to ensuring lasting peace and harmony for the whole human family.

In the name of our common humanity, the international community cannot ignore the appeals of

the developing nations as they face the grave challenges of malnutrition, a widespread fall in the standard of living, insufficient means for educating the young, a lack of basic health care and social services, the spread of AIDS, the often unbearable burden of international debt, the horror of fratricidal wars fomented by unscrupulous arms trafficking, the shameful spectacle of displaced persons and refugees. These are only some of the areas where intervention is urgently needed.

It is important that the hopes raised by last year's World Summit for Social Development should not be betrayed. The seventh of the ten commitments adopted by the participants in the Summit addressed the specific situation of Africa, with reference to the very problems just mentioned. The international community is therefore aware of its obligations and has drafted an agreement admitting its accountability. The Holy See will endeavour to keep before the eyes of the international community the pressing nature of the commitment it has undertaken. And it will not fail to offer the assistance and expertise which is proper to it.

Precisely as a consequence of "the saving mission which is proper to her" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 40), the Church continually speaks out and offers the witness of her actions in favour of international solidarity. In your own country, as in other parts Africa and elsewhere, the Church's activity includes involvement in education, health care and social programmes which benefit individuals and the whole society. It is a service which the Church cannot fail to render to the human family, for her Divine Founder himself exhorts her to look after the needs of others: "I have given you an example, that what I have done you also should do (Cfr. *Io.* 13, 15).

Although her mission in the world is eminently spiritual and therefore distinct from the political order, the Church nonetheless offers civil society the contribution her teaching and experience. This she does because she knows that society will flourish only to the extent that it reflects the moral order established by the Creator. The Church seeks to make known the truth which she has received from her Lord, the truth about the transcendent destiny all men and women, created in the image and likeness God. It is for this reason that the Holy See speaks so insistently about respect for human dignity and human rights, especially the right to life and to religious freedom. This is also the reason why the Catholic Bishops Kenya continually appeal to their fellow citizens to work together ever more generously for integral human development, authentic democracy and social harmony. They constantly invite everyone to overcome the tensions and hostilities which sometimes result from belonging to different ethnic groups, with different traditions, languages and even religions, all which can endanger peace and the pursuit the common good (Cfr. *Ioannis Pauli PP. II Ecclesia in Africa*, 49).

Mr Ambassador, I am confident that your mission will further strengthen the ties friendship already existing between Kenya and the Holy See. I assure you that the various offices the Roman Curia will always be ready to assist you in your task. Upon you, your family and all the beloved people Kenya I invoke the abundant Blessings of Almighty God.

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