



The Holy See

*ADDRESS OF PAUL VI TO THE PRESIDENT OF NIGER**

Saturday, 28 September 1968

Mr. President,

We are very happy to receive you here this morning, together with the important personalities who are accompanying you on your visit to Europe. To you all, We extend a hearty welcome to the Vatican. And, in your persons, We greet all the States of your African and Madagascar Community.

How could We not rejoice knowing that you are all engaged in a joint effort in the search for progress which will benefit all the peoples whom you represent? In our Encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, after warning against nationalism and racism, we said: "We hope that the countries whose development is less advanced will be able to take advantage of their proximity in order to organise among themselves, on a broadened territorial basis, areas for concerted development" (No. 64). And We added that the purpose of all aid from more developed peoples was to enable others to discover for themselves, in full fidelity to their own proper genius, the means for their social and human progress. Such is the goal we must attain. World unity, ever more effective, should allow all peoples to become the artisans of their destiny' (No. 64-65).

We are so deeply convinced of this that We reverted to it when addressing you more directly to Our Message to the episcopate and people of Africa, for the promotion of the religious, civil and social well being of their continent. We repeat it again today, it is for you to take your future in your own hands, and, keeping faithful to your rich ancestral traditions, to build it according to your own requirements, fusing in a special way the values lived by those who have gone before you and the benefits which modern procedures can bring to you. You know that one of these essential values is respect for human individuals, in the legitimate and varied expressions of their ways of life. So, We ask once more that no one be troubled on account of his race, and that an end be put "to the

disorders and acts of violence... which inflict suffering and misery on unarmed populations, who are quietly going about their work" (No. 15).

Who would not hear the cry of distress from so many unfortunate ones, and who could remain indifferent to the misery of his brothers? We cannot hide Our deep concern in the face of frightful situations, and We are sure that all men of heart will wish to unite in their good will to look for ways to prevent such sufferings and to enable everyone to lead the life of a human being. But the African continent and the island of Madagascar are also marching towards tremendous economic and human progress. With you, We rejoice in your projects and what you have already accomplished. And We are happy to see you take your place among the peoples of the world. So We wish to assure you again, at the end of this too brief meeting, of Our affection and also Our hope for the future, and Our joy to know that Our Catholic sons are participating happily with their brothers in the common effort.

We gladly invoke on you, Mr. President and Gentlemen, on your families and your peoples, the richest favours of Almighty God.

*ORa n.28 p.3.