



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO H.E. Mr. RAJAONARIVONY NARISOA
NEW AMBASSADOR OF MADAGASCAR TO THE HOLY SEE**

Clementine Hall
Thursday, 18 December 2008

Mr Ambassador,

I receive you with pleasure today and welcome you at the presentation of the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Madagascar to the Holy See. Please thank H.E. Mr Marc Ravalomanana, President of the Republic, for his cordial wishes. To reciprocate I ask you kindly to convey to him my respectful wishes for himself and for his lofty mission at the service of his citizens. I would also like to greet through you all the beloved Malagasy people.

I am touched, Mr Ambassador, by the courteous words you have addressed to me and I thank you for them. This year the "Great Island" has not been spared by natural disasters. Cyclones have destroyed numerous homes, bridges and roads, and the paddy fields and flocks have been seriously damaged.

Some people have died, others have been injured and yet others have lost their possessions. I would like to assure the entire Malagasy people of my closeness in concern and prayer. May God, in his goodness, take pity on his people and hear the voices of those who call him (cf. Ps 5: 3) and implore his aid! And with the Psalmist I say: "Arise, O Lord; O God, lift up your hand; forget not the afflicted" (Ps 9b[10]: 12). In this context it is fortunate that the Solidarity and Development 2008 Prize of the St Matthew Foundation in memory of Cardinal Francis Xavier Van Thuan was awarded last 13 November, on the occasion of the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to the AKAMASOA project for small houses for the homeless in Antananarivo.

Two years ago, the President of the Republic presented and began to implement the "Madagascar Action Plan" (MAP) and "Fihavanana" (Fraternity in Solidarity), destined to develop the country, especially the rural zones, to build roads and to protect nature, as well as to encourage social harmony and peace. Scholarization, measures to diminish infant mortality and the fight against pandemics were also promoted. I hope for Madagascar that these projects and achievements will meet with the renewed favour of the international community so that it may continue to show great generosity and avoid exploiting the financial crisis that is rocking world and national economies as a pretext to reduce or suppress aid.

In July next year, Your Excellency, your country will be hosting the Summit of the African Union and the following year, the Summit of the French-speaking communities. These two events will direct international attention to Madagascar and enable it to work for harmony and peace among peoples, especially in the African continent, tortured by countless conflicts civil conflicts or wars between States and by the human tragedies that afflict a defenceless population that is all too often obliged to fight for its human and material survival. These international meetings, which must be encouraged, not only foster dialogue between different partners but also and above all open doors to various kinds of cooperation that permit reciprocal exchange, in dignity, goods and values that will enrich the respective populations and attenuate the social and economic imbalances that exist between the north and south of the planet. When these goods and values are fully used in conformity with the Lord's design, the whole of humanity will be greater. Lastly, as my venerable Predecessor said to the previous Ambassador, these international meetings tell the world that Madagascar desires to be increasingly committed "to the path of good government and respect for human rights" (*Address to H.E. Mr Jean-Pierre Razafy-Andriamihaingo, Ambassador of Madagascar, 13 December 2002*).

As you know, Mr Ambassador, the Catholic Church desires to make her own contribution. She has been present in Madagascar for centuries and is predominantly Malagasy. Malagasy Catholics, lay people and members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy share the sufferings and hopes of the people. They work, in accordance with their means, for the common good and the development of the Malagasy people. They desire to contribute to building a society founded on justice and peace. Their intention is to do their utmost to serve the Church and the people whose children they are, in this their nation.

They are therefore concerned with the whole of national life and the laws that regulate it, as well as the bills of law that must perfect the citizens' daily life. The long, rich tradition of the Church makes a positive contribution to the gradual construction of the nation. The Church does not seek to interfere in a domain that is not her own and is strictly political; quite simply, by virtue of her own nature, she desires to participate in the building and consolidation of national life.

Mr Ambassador, I would like for you also to kindly convey my greetings to the Catholic community in your country. It participates in the development and growth of the entire nation and you know

the role it plays in the areas of education and health care, especially for the least privileged people whose plight it endeavours to relieve. The Church has contributed some important figures, as their charity and love for Madagascar has demonstrated. I am thinking in particular of Bl. Victoria Rasoamanarivo and of Venerable Bro. Raphael-Louis Rafiringa, whose Cause is progressing. I am sure that the young generations will find in them ever relevant models to follow and to imitate.

At the time when your mission of representation to the Holy See is officially beginning, I offer you, Mr Ambassador, my cordial good wishes for the success of your noble task and I would like to assure you that you will always meet with a warm welcome and attentive understanding from my collaborators, so that the harmonious relations that exist between the Republic of Madagascar and the Holy See may continue and be deepened.

I wholeheartedly invoke upon you, Your Excellency, upon your family and upon your collaborators, as well as upon the Nation's leaders and the entire Malagasy people, an abundance of God's Blessings.

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