



The Holy See

***DISCOURS DU PAPE JEAN-PAUL II
AU NOUVEL AMBASSADEUR DU ZAÏRE
PRÈS LE SAINT-SIÈGE* Lundi 17 mars 1986***

1. I am very happy to welcome you to this house, where you shall always find a cordial welcome. Your Excellency is joining a line of Ambassadors from Zaire, following Mr. Tshimba1anga Shala-Dibwe who, in the course of the nine years he spent here, had become quite familiar with the life of the Holy See. To you I express the wish that the mission upon which you are embarking today will be a happy and productive one.

You have spoken, in terms that I greatly appreciate, of the things that matter most to your country and to its leaders, of what characterizes the mission of the Holy See in the world and the mission of the Church in Zaire. I thank you for this testimony.

Please convey to His Excellency Marshal Mobutu Sese Seko, President of the Republic, my respectful greetings and my fervent wishes for success in the accomplishment of his very lofty responsibilities. I remember with gratitude the cordial welcome he gave me last August in Kinshasa and in his home

2. I wish to express today the respect and the affection I have for the people of Zaire. Twice I have been able to appreciate on the spot their kindness and hospitality, the strength of their religious faith, the resolve with which they are confronting responsibly the immense challenges that face the national community and the Church. I am certain that the example of the Blessed Anwarite Nengapeta will continue to inspire not only the sisters and all the Christians in their unwavering faithfulness to the Gospel, but also the entire people of Zaire, who are justly proud of their martyr follow citizen; for, as I said on 15 August, at the end of the beatification ceremonies in the presence of the highest ranking lay and religious officials: «It is upon such acts of courage, of faithfulness~ to commitments, of holiness that the honour of a nation is built, as well as its maturity, its solidity, its unity and its progress».

3. Your Excellency, you wish to strengthen and develop the good relations between the Republic of Zaire and the Holy See. There is awareness on both sides that this would be of great benefit to

the people of Zaire, who, in large numbers, are deeply attached to the Catholic faith.

On the one hand, the Holy See is deeply aware of the heavy task that burdens those responsible for the common good of all the people of Zaire. We look with affection upon your huge country in the very heart of the African continent, rich in resources of all kinds and richer still in its ethnic variety. It has dealt with the difficult problems faced by all countries reaching independence, – maintained unity among all its peoples, provided communication - among distant regions throughout a vast territory, instilled in all a sense of patriotism and devotion to their nation. The recent celebrations of the twenty-fifth anniversary of independence brought out all these positive accomplishments.

Together with the bishops of Zaire, the Holy See continues to express the hope that this progress will continue on all levels – political, economic, social, moral, spiritual so that conditions may be realized allowing for the satisfaction of the basic human needs of each and every citizen, each having to find his place and take on his responsibility while contributing to the good of all. Certainly, the realization of all these conditions and their effective application in a spirit of harmony and freedom represent an enormous task that calls for prayers for those who have undertaken to serve the nation. We cannot but hope that the Government's decision, of which you have spoken, to institute a «seven-year social programme», will be for all concerned an opportunity for commitments and concrete measures towards greater justice for the least favoured sectors and groups.

4. On the other hand, without interfering in the administrative and judicial functions that properly belong to public officials, the Church is happy to collaborate in the human and spiritual progress of the people of Zaire.

The Holy See does this by its witness, by its actions in the field of international affairs and in its bilateral relationships, thanks to its recognized position of equality among sovereign states. You yourself have pointed out, Your Excellency, the concern of the Holy See for justice and peace with no frontiers, as well as the untiring efforts it has undertaken to help people step beyond attitudes of self interest and nationalism in order to go forth resolutely on the path of dialogue and solidarity. The Church is therefore happy when she can count on the trust and cooperation of political leaders.

However, in presenting the ideal of the Gospel and the doctrine of the Church which clarifies it, the Holy See strives with equal effort to develop the conscience of the citizens and to encourage them in their commitments to justice and charity in the service of their brothers. Such influence is exerted principally and most tangibly by the local Church, nourished by these principles and acting in communion with the successor of Peter. On this point, I would like to thank you for having so correctly evoked the role of the Zairese Church which has frequently expressed how deeply it shares in the joys and hopes, the sufferings and concerns of all Zairese. It would like to give both

young people and adults an understanding of the supernatural end towards which life is directed, along with respect for man, for his dignity; and for all his fundamental rights, whatever his race, his social rank or his capacities. The Church would like to strengthen their desire to learn a profession, to work with courage and integrity at the tasks that are entrusted to them, especially in public service; to understand the demands of the common good and of patriotism without allowing people to be sacrificed to these values and without being blind to the problems and needs of other countries. In other words, the Church wishes to promote all moral values that allow a country to move ahead in justice and in peace; it strives to accomplish this concretely through educational undertakings, health services and social services.

I am particularly happy that Your Excellency recognizes that the answers to the great problems we face today – injustice, inequality, crime, economic crises and food shortages – are both material and spiritual in nature. The Church would like to feel that its loyalty and its commitments are understood, even when she feels the need to express demands of a humanitarian or moral nature that clearly have repercussions on the social structure and on the activities of persons in power. She asks also to enjoy the religious freedom that naturally belongs to believers and their communities. Let me add immediately that on this last point, the Catholics of Zaire appreciate the guarantees that they have received.

5. Finally, Your Excellency mentioned problems of interest to the world community – the North-South gap and East-West relations – and problems of particular concern to African countries: hunger, disease, underdevelopment, apartheid, local conflicts. The Holy See is so deeply concerned by these problems that I take every possible opportunity to call them to the attention of political leaders, as I did in Yaoundé when speaking to the Ambassadors present in that city. Last 11 January, speaking to the entire Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, I insisted particular]y on the solidarity that must exist first at the local level, then at the regional and continental levels, if we are to reach truly human solutions.

The Holy See hopes that Zaire will contribute to the resolution of the serious problems that arise at the regional and continental levels, as well as at the world level, with a view to the progress of peace, justice and brotherhood.

Your Excellency, I include all these intentions in prayer, hoping for the happiness, the prosperity and the spiritual growth of your dear country. I hope that you personally shall make your own contribution in the course of the mission that you are now undertaking at the Holy See. May God inspire you and assist your leaders in the accomplishment of their tasks! May he bless you and your family!

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