



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO TANZANIA, BURUNDI,
RWANDA, AND THE IVORY COAST

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE HEADS OF MISSION AND DIPLOMATIC PERSONNEL
ACCREDITED TO THE GOVERNMENT OF BURUNDI***

Wednesday, 5 September 1990

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On the day that I arrive in Burundi, I am happy to greet the Diplomatic Corps accredited here, the Consular Corps and Representatives of International Organizations gathered here tonight. Thank you for attending this meeting. Your Dean has given us a broad picture of your common concerns. He conveyed to me your deference, and I am touched. To him I express my friendly gratitude.

As guests in this beautiful country, you warmly support the efforts displayed by the people of Burundi to strengthen their national unity. You know the paths they have followed, the trials they have been through, the courage they have shown in adversity. This people whose members share the same culture and real sense of the spiritual invites you to give the relations which you are in charge of the dimensions of a dialogue imbued with mutual respect and hope for the future.

2. The human relations which I am speaking about give the work of the diplomat its true meaning. Mentioning that its first objective is peace is not merely a matter of convenience. Conflicts continue to sow fear and suffering in entire regions of the world, particularly in this continent. As we meet this evening, we think about it with a deep concern for the peoples involved. We ask that dialogue may win over confrontation and that those responsible for the common good may see to it that the spirit of conciliation prevails over every other attitude.

3. In Burundi you represent States which are nearby or far off, nations whose levels of

development are very different, as well as worldwide or regional Organizations; your missions have in common the promotion of cooperation for the good of the people of this country. We know that the recent change in relations between the nations of Eastern and Western Europe caused some concern for the countries of the South as victims of an economic crisis which they cannot overcome by themselves. Undergoing the repercussions of market fluctuations without being able to compensate adequately for them, they often feel that they are being mistreated by powers which they think are acting only in selfish interests. Such a situation, which I cannot describe in detail, invites us to reflect on the meaning of the international relations which you are called to serve here. Although it is unfair to regard the action of the great powers and the International Organizations only as a search for profit without regard for poor countries, it is no less true to say that cooperation between nations is primarily a human reality and a partnership between parties who respect one another. We are happy to see a certain change in the manner of evaluating a country's development. In fact, economic indicators alone cannot convey the virtue of a people or the whole of its achievements. The health of a people, their educational level and the quality of their daily life must also be taken into consideration. I can repeat what I said about peace, applying it to development which we must see, "as the fruit of true and honest relations in every aspect of the life of mankind on this earth: social, economic, cultural and moral" (Message for World Peace Day 1986 n. 4).

4. The need for constructive cooperation throughout the world appears to be more and more tied to the need for true dialogue. The partners will make a positive contribution to the happiness of their peoples if they each feel a sense of public service, if it is clear that the interests of one party are not safeguarded to the detriment of the others. The idea of an agricultural or industrial project or plans for providing equipment will have a greater chance of succeeding if they mature through open negotiations with those who will put them into effect and benefit from them. It is necessary to support the activity of free persons, to increase their means of livelihood, to mobilize their working capacity without ignoring their responsibilities and their development, to respond to aspirations which are truly theirs.

In fact, to make cooperation between partners fully useful to the development of the less-favoured without challenging their role, one must go beyond the simple level of exchange of goods and search for profits. By the mutual understanding of cultures, the sharing of scientific progress, the discovery of riches that cannot be converted into cash, one will find the truly human meaning of exchange. In the face of destitution and sickness, it is solidarity and fraternal love which will inspire unselfish aid. In what must become a meeting of peoples before being a technical collaboration, it will be natural to respect the social and family structures, the moral and spiritual convictions of each human group. This is an essential condition for each person to keep his or her dignity and to be able, in the development of his or her own abilities, to make his or her own original contribution to the human community.

5. I believe that these convictions correspond broadly to the experience of many International

Organizations, of many devoted people who dedicate their energy to contribute to the development of the most afflicted peoples. I should like to express the esteem I have for many specialized governmental and non-governmental Institutions, of denominational inspiration or not, which spare no effort in contributing to the solidarity of nations in concrete ways and with an effectiveness which we hope will grow.

These reflections I propose are really inspired by the trust the Church has in the human person, in his or her resources of intelligence and heart, in the human capacity of facing up to adversity and of finally overcoming divisions. I want to pay tribute to the courage of the poor, the numerous poor in the world. Their dignity commands our admiration. They do not deserve to be left alone in their daily struggle to live.

Ladies and Gentlemen, with all my heart I hope that you may accomplish your mission for the good of this country and of the great human family. I ask God to help you by giving you His grace.

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