



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. Mr. MPUMELELO JOSEPH NDUMISO HLOPHE
FIRST AMBASSADOR OF THE KINGDOM OF SWAZILAND
TO THE HOLY SEE***

Thursday, 28 October 1993

Your Excellency,

On this auspicious occasion I extend to you, the first Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of Swaziland to the Holy See, a cordial welcome to the Vatican. I take particular pleasure in accepting your Letters of Credence from His Majesty King Mswati III, and I am grateful for the kind words spoken by your Sovereign when he received the Apostolic Nuncio earlier this year. I am confident that this exchange of permanent representatives will strengthen the ties of friendship which already exist between the Apostolic See and Swaziland, and that it will assist us in working together for the well-being of the peoples of Southern Africa. I vividly remember my meeting with the King during my Pastoral Visit to your nation five years ago, when the beloved Swazi People welcomed me with such warmth and hospitality. I ask you to convey to his Majesty, as well as to the Queen Mother, my sentiments of esteem and respect.

In past decades, when so many nations in Africa were affirming their determination to improve the lot of their citizens and to take their rightful place in the international community, that Continent seemed on the verge of achieving new levels of development. This process however was not always successful and did not everywhere produce the good results for which people yearned. To the point that at the beginning of the year, in my remarks to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, I voiced particular concern about the ways in which the two great threats to development – war and poverty – are growing in Africa (Cf. John Paul II, *Address to the Ambassadors accredited to the Holy See*, 2, 16 January 1993).

In the face of situations of armed conflict, I cannot but urge all parties to lay down their weapons

and have recourse to dialogue in order to resolve disputes on the basis of the norms of true justice and respect for human rights. In regard to the worsening of people's material circumstances, the Church is an advocate of the poor before the world, a voice appealing on their behalf to the conscience of believers of all faiths and to every person of good will. In the international forum she seeks to encourage efforts to ensure that an appropriate share of mankind's vast technological and material resources is devoted to programmes of authentic development. Without help from the world community, there is an all too real danger that the movements towards democracy and political renewal in Africa will not achieve their full flowering. Without development, mankind will never be free from the threat of violence, for the enormous number of people living in conditions of extreme poverty – with whole sectors of the population often finding themselves on the margins of civil life within their own countries – "is not only an affront to human dignity but also represents a *clear threat to peace*" (John Paul II, *Message for the World Day of Peace 1993*, 3, 8 December 1992).

When I was in Swaziland I was pleased to note the efforts being made "to ensure racial harmony, religious liberty, social welfare, and a hospitable welcome for refugees", all signs of a sound civic order (John Paul II, *Holy Mass at "Somhlolo Stadium" of Mbabane, Swaziland*, 16 September 1988). Continued progress in the life of a nation requires a model of development which is appropriate to its particular history and characteristics. The advancement of a people must defend and uphold the worthy values and elements of its traditional way of life. In your own country, as in many other parts of Africa, the profound sense of solidarity, especially among family members, and social structures which place human relations above economic gain must not be lost in attempts to achieve a higher level of material prosperity. This sort of clear recognition of the worth of the individual, together with an appreciation for a person's place within the community and his indispensable contribution to it, should have as a logical consequence respect for the rights of every person in society (Cf. Paul VI, *Africae Terrarum*, 10-13).

Swazi Catholics, although a small minority within the Kingdom, are firmly committed to cooperating with their fellow-citizens in building up the nation. In particular, under the leadership of their Bishop and priests, the lay faithful are called to bear witness before all to the sacredness of life and marriage, and to show by word and example that the sanctuary of the home must always be protected, so that the family – the basic unit of society – can fulfil its educational, humanizing and socializing functions. The Church counts upon the legal guarantee of religious liberty so that in Swaziland she can zealously pursue her mission of leading people to worship God "in spirit and truth" (Jn. 4: 23) and to express the compassion of Christ in works of education, health care, and other forms of service.

I offer my best wishes to Your Excellency as you begin your mission on behalf of your King and your country. I assure you that you will receive full cooperation from the various departments of the Holy See as you discharge your lofty responsibilities. Upon his Majesty King Mswati III and all the citizens of Swaziland I invoke abundant divine blessings of peace and well-being.

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