



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

TO H.E. Mr BENJAMIN GODZI GODWYLL

NEW AMBASSADOR OF GHANA TO THE HOLY SEE* *Saturday, 19 November 1994 Mr. Ambassador,* It is

my pleasure to accept the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Ghana to the Holy See. I am also happy to receive the greetings you bring from His Excellency President Rawlings, and I would ask you to convey to the President my own prayerful good wishes for the Government and people of Ghana. As you have noted, there is a long history of Christian presence in Ghana, such that today more than half of the Ghanaian population professes Christianity. Moreover, the guarantees of religious freedom provided in the Constitution of the Republic of Ghana have created favourable conditions for the members of the Catholic Church to proceed with many projects of service which contribute to the spiritual and material development of your people and your country. In this regard, I am grateful to Your Excellency for mentioning the important contributions which the Catholic Church makes in education, health-care and social services. And not in Ghana alone, but throughout Africa the Church seeks to proclaim the Gospel message of truth, justice and peace, a message which requires concrete actions and not mere words or theories (cf. John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 57). Indeed, all who sincerely work for the integral development of the human person and of society will always find a willing partner in the Catholic Church. This integral development, however, requires concerted efforts on the part of all peoples and nations. The last five years, in fact, have been marked by profound changes in the way in which nations and peoples interact: former divisions into two distinct blocs, ideologically, politically and militarily opposed to each other, have given way to a period of uncertainty, even of confusion in the search for a solid basis for bilateral and multilateral relations between peoples and governments. The failure of the centralized economies of the countries of the Eastern bloc and the need to offset social tensions arising out of the breakdown of the Communist system have to a large extent occupied the attention of the developed nations of Europe and America. For this reason, I have on many occasions urged world leaders and the international community not to forget the needs of the developing countries of the South of the world. In a special way I have invited them to be mindful of the needs of Africa. Many African countries, including your own beloved Ghana, have been struggling to strengthen the trend towards social and political renewal, seeing this as a condition for real development. In some cases these efforts have brought good results and have effectively contributed to increased harmony and well-being. They enable all sectors of the population to take an active part in the life of the nation. In other cases, obstacles both old and new stand in the way of progress, preventing countries from setting out on the path to democracy and political pluralism. The tragic events in Rwanda are deeply shocking evidence of this. Learning from that horrendous experience, all Africans must be convinced that political association cannot be reduced to ethnic identity, and that a country's institutions must be at the service of all its citizens equally and with a truly civic spirit. In this respect recognition is due to the many efforts being made by your President to promote peace in nearby Liberia, specifically by supporting the international

peacekeeping force presently active in that country. Devastated and numbed by so much violence, the suffering people of Liberia must not be abandoned by the international community. Above all, in the presence of this situation of conflict, all countries must be reminded of their moral obligation to respect the arms embargo declared by the United Nations. I hope and pray that Liberians will be spared further violence and that a just solution can be found to the disagreements that gave rise to this terrible tragedy. The developed world has a clear responsibility towards Africa, not only by reason of past history but also because peace and development cannot be ensured for some people if they are not at the same time accessible to all. Programmes of co-operation are therefore necessary and should be available, especially in the transfer of needed technology, in the fight against the terrible AIDS epidemic and in the care of the great number of displaced persons and refugees. But this assistance should fully respect the specific social and cultural structures and traditions of Africa itself, since Africans must always be the artisans and masters of their own development and their own future. The Catholic Church recently celebrated a Special Session of the Synod of Bishops devoted to the role and work of the Church in Africa. Among other things, the Synod called for a renewed practice of justice and for the rule of law; it saw the need for increased education and for a culture of peace excluding violence as a means of political struggle (cf. Synod of Bishops for Africa, *Message*, 34 and 35, [6 May 1994]). It is my hope that these objectives may be very much a part of Ghana's life and political agenda. I can assure Your Excellency that the Catholic Church in Ghana will continue to work for these goals. Catholics share the deep yearning of all their brothers and sisters for true peace and harmony in a society which champions the rights and dignity of each of its individual members. Mr. Ambassador, as you assume your responsibilities within the diplomatic community accredited to the Holy See, I offer you my prayerful good wishes for the success of your high mission and assure you that the various offices of the Holy See will always be ready to assist you in the fulfilment of your duties. I cordially invoke upon you and upon the beloved people of Ghana the abundant blessings of Almighty

God.

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