



# The Holy See

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**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS  
POPE JOHN PAUL II  
TO H.E. Mr JOSÉ BERNARDO DOMINGOS QUIOSA  
NEW AMBASSADOR  
OF ANGOLA TO THE HOLY SEE\***

*Saturday, 7 February 1998*

*Mr Ambassador,* Your presence here today crowns the establishment of diplomatic relations between this Apostolic See and your country on 8 July 1997. I am therefore very pleased to receive the Letters of Credence appointing you the first Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Angola to the Holy See. I am grateful for the kind words and gracious sentiments you have expressed and, in particular, for the respectful greetings and good wishes you bring me from H.E. Mr José Eduardo dos Santos, President of the Republic, who wished to mark the day and the act of the establishment of our diplomatic relations by his welcome visit here to the Vatican. I ask Your Excellency to express my cordial greetings to the President, together with the assurance of my prayers for the reconciliation and prosperity of his people. By establishing their representative's residence in Rome, the Angolan authorities show the importance they attach to strengthening those bonds with the Successor of Peter that faith and history have forged in the soul of generation after generation of people living in the territories which today constitute Angola. Having embraced the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the complete answer to their longing for salvation, they sometimes feel cheated in their expectations due to poverty and human limitations or to the events and misfortunes of history. Now, when they wish to show their joyful gratitude for the faith they received, or in the past, when they had to find a remedy for pastoral needs or for the abuses of which they were victims, they thought of Rome, as you said, Mr Ambassador, which in this regard can interpret your presence here as the realization of a five-centuries-old dream. Thus in giving you my cordial welcome at this presentation, I would like to assure you of my esteem for the fulfilment of the lofty mission which your Government has entrusted to you, and, through Your Excellency, to express once again the deep affection I feel for all Angola's children. During my Pastoral Visit to Angola in June 1992, I could personally experience the loyalty and warm friendship of Angolans for the Successor of Peter and admire the deep religious feeling in people's hearts which led to a clamour for peace and justice. My happy memories of those days became a prayer during the tragic events that in the last months of 1992 disrupted the social and political life of the country, which was once again caught up in a spiral of violence that was to last until November 1994, when Angola, through the Lusaka agreements and the consequent formation of the National Government of Unity and Reconciliation, returned to political pluralism and the democratization of social life. This path is difficult and full of obstacles, but the culture of violence must give way to the culture of peace. Only a sincere desire to achieve real

reconciliation will permit resistance to be overcome and ensure that the common good is given priority over particular interests. God blesses the courageous efforts of clear-sighted leaders in their search for what is best for the nation. In this regard, together with my voice others are being raised on all sides demanding that the desired meeting between Mr José Eduardo dos Santos and Mr Jonas Malheiro Savimbi take place as soon as possible. As everyone hopes, this meeting will provide a climate of mutual trust and esteem, which will greatly contribute to the process of national and regional normalization. Angolans cannot allow the war to continue to mortgage their future in the form of fear, suspicion and division. In my *Message for the World Day of Peace 1997*, I said: "One cannot remain a prisoner of the past, for individuals and peoples need a sort of 'healing of memories', so that past evils will not come back again. This does not mean forgetting past events; it means re-examining them with a new attitude and learning precisely from the experience of suffering that only love can build up, whereas hatred produces devastation and ruin" (n. 3; *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, 18/25 December 1996, p. 3). In speaking of a new attitude, I was thinking concretely of the offer of forgiveness. Forgiveness and reconciliation are the way to strengthen the bonds of solidarity between individuals and peoples. This solidarity will produce the true and lasting peace that everyone wants. Another attitude is dialogue as an option for personal and community growth. Everyone must encourage dialogue, both in public life and in the various areas of social life; this will enable each individual and group to be recognized in their diversity and, at the same time, to feel that they are called to serve their homeland. The existence of different groups within the country is both a challenge and an opportunity, especially for political leaders and legislators. Civil authorities must be aware of the legitimate demands of various groups and respond to them appropriately. May I assure you, Mr Ambassador, that the Church and the Holy See wish to co-operate with the Angolan nation and its leaders, just as the Government and the nation wish to collaborate with the Church. The nature of this co-operation was clearly defined by the Second Vatican Council in the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes* on the Church in the modern world: "The political community and the Church ... both are devoted to the personal vocation of man, though under different titles. This service will redound the more effectively to the welfare of all in so far as both institutions practise better co-operation according to the local and prevailing situation" (n. 76). Man, in his transcendent existential dimension, is a meeting point for the Church and the political community. Conscious of her mission on man's behalf, the Church does not seek to interfere in the concrete direction of the nation's sociopolitical life, but wishes, within the scope of her mandate, to indicate the motives she receives from the Gospel and the faith, motives that help unite hearts and minds in building a society which is sound, strong and tolerant, and can resolve conflicts by means of dialogue, an Angolan society open to man and, in international relations, open to Africa and the world. The Church will support every effort and initiative whose objective is the common good of all. Mr Ambassador, your presence here confirms that the Republic of Angola is really beginning a new era. I am convinced that as a result of the mission Your Excellency is beginning today, the bonds of friendship and co-operation between your nation and the Holy See will be increased and strengthened. I assure you that the various agencies and dicasteries of the Roman Curia will always be ready to assist you in fulfilling your duties. As I again offer you my best wishes for the success of your mission, I invoke the blessings of the Most High on Your Excellency, on your distinguished family and your co-workers in the Embassy, on the Government and the beloved people of

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Angola.

\**L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly edition in English* n.10 p.8. © Copyright 1998 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana