



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II
TO THE NEW AMBASSADOR
OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA TO THE HOLY SEE****

25 May 2000

Mr Ambassador, I extend a warm welcome to you as I accept the Letters of Credence appointing you Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Ghana to the Holy See. Your presence here today evokes memories of the first Pastoral Visit which, as Successor of Peter, I made to the African continent: that journey brought me to your own country, where I was blessed to experience at first hand the hospitality, warmth and rich cultural traditions of the Ghanaian people. With this vivid recollection before me, I am grateful for the greetings and good wishes which you bring from President Jerry John Rawlings. I gladly reciprocate these kind sentiments, asking you to convey to the Ghanaian authorities and people the expression of my esteem and the assurance of my prayers for the country's well-being and prosperity. The human family stands at the dawn of a new millennium and is greatly buoyed by the tremendous progress that has been made, especially over the last hundred years, in the social, economic and scientific spheres. Despite these many cultural and technological advances, however, there remain important areas in contemporary life which have seen little improvement or which have even suffered decline. I am thinking particularly of the urgent need to face the challenges of inequality and poverty with effective structures of worldwide solidarity and cooperation among nations. As Your Excellency has remarked, there is a need to restructure international economic relations so that the less fortunate, in Africa and elsewhere, will be enabled to share equitably in the world's resources; and there is a need as well to promote channels of dialogue, with a view to the peaceful resolution of crises within countries and between nations. In a very real way, the road upon which the family of nations and the family of man must embark in the twenty-first century is the road of solidarity and peace. In fact, without solidarity there can be no true peace. As I wrote in my [Message for the 2000 World Day of Peace](#), "Failure awaits every plan which would separate two indivisible and interdependent rights: the right to peace and the right to an integral development born of solidarity" (No. 13). It would seem that the time has come to reflect on the nature of the economy — both national and international — and the purpose that it should really serve. On a worldwide level, therefore, in wealthy nations no less than in developing countries, it must be recognized that the poor have a right to share in the material goods of the earth and to make proper use of their capacity to work, "thus creating a world that is more just and prosperous for all. The advancement of the poor constitutes a great opportunity for the moral, cultural and even economic growth of all humanity" (Encyclical Letter [Centesimus Annus](#), 28). There is a need

to reconsider “the concept of ‘prosperity’ itself, to prevent it from being enclosed in a narrow utilitarian perspective which leaves very little space for values such as solidarity and altruism” (*Message for the 2000 World Day of Peace*, 15). At the same time, the century just ended has offered ample evidence of the violence, destruction and death that ensues when peoples and nations have recourse to arms rather than to dialogue, when war is chosen over the often more difficult path of mutual understanding and respect. If peace is to be true and lasting, based on the legitimate aspirations of peoples and social groups, then it must be sought in a context of dialogue: not only is dialogue for peace possible, it is the only path worthy of man. Paradoxically enough, after the violence and devastation of war has run its course, the need for dialogue remains; resorting to armed confrontation never resolves a conflict or dispute but merely delays its true settlement — and always with tragic consequences, as we are witnessing today in various parts of Africa. Authentic dialogue presupposes an honest search for what is true, good and just for every person, every group and every society; it is a sincere effort to identify what people have in common despite tensions, oppositions and conflict. Furthermore, authentic dialogue comes to be ever more intimately linked to solidarity as the peoples and nations of the earth recognize their mutual interdependence in the economic, political and cultural spheres (cf. *Message for the 1983 World Day of Peace*, 6). The Holy See is active in the international arena specifically to promote such dialogue and to foster such solidarity. As Your Excellency has noted, the Church herself is ardently committed to the cause of peace. Indeed, her Divine Founder has entrusted to her a religious and humanitarian mission, different than that of the political community, but open nonetheless to many forms of cooperation and mutual support. It is this mission which underlies the Holy See’s presence in the international community, a presence directed solely to the good of the human family: promoting peace, defending human dignity and human rights, working for the integral development of peoples. This is a duty which derives necessarily from the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and is a responsibility shared by all Christians. For this reason, the Holy See will continue to be a committed partner with your country as Ghana seeks to advance its own development — politically, socially and economically — and as your nation seeks to be a force for stability and peace in your own region of West Africa and within the community of nations. In this same regard, I am pleased to note Your Excellency’s recognition of the significant contribution made by the institutions of the Catholic Church to Ghanaian society at large, especially in the fields of education and health care. In fact, the Church considers her apostolate in these areas to be an essential element of her religious mission, and she is ever eager to carry out this work in harmony with others who are active in the same fields. Cooperation between Church and State is of great importance in advancing the intellectual and moral training of citizens, who will then be better equipped to build a truly just and stable society. Mr Ambassador, I am confident that your mission to the Holy See will strengthen the bonds of understanding and friendship between us. You can be assured that the various offices of the Roman Curia will always be ready to assist you in the discharge of your high duties. Upon yourself and the beloved people of Ghana I cordially invoke the abundant blessings of Almighty

God.

* *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, vol. XXIII, 1 p.957-960. *L'Osservatore Romano* 26.5.2000 p.10. *L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly edition in English* n. 22 p. 4, 5. © Copyright 2000 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana