



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO H.E. MR JOSEPH BONESHA
NEW AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF RWANDA
TO THE HOLY SEE****

Thursday, 16 June 2005

Mr Ambassador,

I am pleased to welcome you, Your Excellency, on the occasion of the presentation of the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Rwanda to the Holy See. Thank you for conveying to me the greetings of H.E. Mr Paul Kagamé, President of the Republic. I would be grateful if you would kindly reciprocate by expressing to him my best wishes for his mission and for the entire Rwandan People.

You emphasize, Mr Ambassador, your Government's willingness to continue developing the relations that exist between the Republic of Rwanda and the Holy See; the 40th anniversary of these established relations was celebrated in 2004. This collaboration is based on the common desire, with respect for the prerogatives of each one, that all the inhabitants, without exception, be offered conditions of coexistence that will enable them to take an ever greater part in the human and spiritual progress of their Country, scarred by its recent history.

Ceremonies to commemorate the genocide took place last year, reminding Rwandans and the whole world of the terrible tragedy that occurred in 1994, which rent the social, economic, cultural and family fabric of the country. Today, we must feel called to work without respite for peace and reconciliation, to prepare a serene future for the present and future generations!

This implies, first of all, a conscientious self-examination regarding the profound causes of this

tragedy, to plant in memories and in hearts the imperative duty of learning to live as brothers and sisters and rejecting barbarity in all its forms. This also requires the guarantee of conditions of security that allow the democratic institutions to function harmoniously. Likewise, it is important to guarantee to all citizens their basic rights. They must be given access to an equitable justice that serves the truth and banishes fear, revenge, impunity and inequality in the near future.

It is to be hoped that the efforts being made to establish real, reconciliatory justice will consolidate national unity and determine political, economic and social decisions that will encourage the ongoing development of the Country, the recovery of dignity for all its inhabitants and an increase in stability for the Great Lakes Region.

I was moved by your words, Your Excellency, stressing the positive role played by the Catholic Church in the process of national reconstruction. The Church, in fact, is deeply involved in the process of reconciliation and forgiveness, through the statements of her Bishops, whom I met here recently, through her numerous institutions in the areas of charitable aid, education and health care, as well as through her pastoral care that is dedicated to healing hearts and helping people rediscover the joy of living together as brothers and sisters.

In this Year of the Eucharist, the faithful and their Pastors are particularly focused on their ability to celebrate the Sacrament of unity on Sunday. Here, they find new strength to become artisans of communion and hope.

As I reminded the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, the Church "asks no privileges for herself but only the legitimate conditions of freedom to carry out her mission" (*Address to the Diplomatic Corps, 12 May 2005; L'Osservatore Romano English edition, 18 May 2005, p. 2*). It is to be hoped that dialogue, followed-up with the Authorities of your Country, will help people perceive more and more clearly the desire of the Catholic Church to take an active part in the human and spiritual development of all Rwandans.

These bonds of trusting collaboration are necessary to the Church if she is to exercise her mission ever more effectively and work for brotherhood and peace, with respect for the specific features of the human and religious communities that make up the Nation. The organization of Congresses on education and health care witness to the common concern to build a more united Nation, with respect for the mission of each one, in which there is greater solidarity.

At the time when you are inaugurating your mission to the Holy See, I offer you my very best wishes for its success. You may rest assured that with my collaborators you will always find the attentive and understanding welcome you may need.

Your Excellency, I wholeheartedly invoke upon you, your family, your collaborators and all the Rwandan People and their Leaders, an abundance of divine Blessings.

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