



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. Mr PAUL NDIAYE,
NEW AMBASSADOR OF SENEGAL TO THE HOLY SEE**

Saturday, 2 December 1978

Mr Ambassador,

I am very happy to receive you today. Senegal, which you now represent as Ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary, is a country with which the Holy See has long maintained friendly relations. Your President, His Excellency Mr Léopold Sédar Senghor, who has charged you to transmit his good wishes to me, is a statesman whose visit my revered predecessor Pope Paul VI received several times with pleasure and whose interventions he appreciated. Kindly convey to him my sentiments of high consideration and deep esteem.

My thought goes spontaneously to the Church in Senegal, and particularly to dear Cardinal Hyacinthe Thiandoum and my other Brothers in the episcopate. But in this instance, it is for all your fellow-countrymen that I formulate fervent wishes of happiness, peace and progress.

An essential condition of this progress—as Your Excellency stressed to my deep satisfaction—is respect for and the promotion of, spiritual values. Certainly, the expansion of knowledge, the struggle for better conditions of health, and economic development, are necessary and deserve all our efforts: I am thinking of the drama of the drought, which must be remedied thanks to wide solidarity; I am thinking of the courageous achievements of your Government in the cultural field. But if this progress were to be accompanied by a materialistic conception of life, it would actually be a regression. Man would be mutilated and he would not be long in losing his dignity and his sacred character, at the same time as the ultimate meaning of his existence which is to live in the presence of God and in brotherly relations with his neighbour. Every civilization must take care not to lose its soul!

It is the honour of your country, it is the honour of African tradition, to preserve the intuition of the sacred. The civilization of "négritude" (Negro civilization), which President Senghor himself has analysed with penetrating insight, includes this deeply rooted religious sense and encourages it. It must, however, be deepened and educated, in order to be able to deal without reduction with the whole of modern culture, with its philosophies and its scientific and technical spirit.

Tolerance and peace among the disciples of the great religious confessions are facilitated by the institutions of your country, under the wise guidance of your President. With regard to these religious confessions the State keeps the distance which permits the necessary impartiality and the normal distinction between political interests and religious matters. But this distance is not indifference: the State knows how to mark its esteem for spiritual values and encourages, with justice, the services that religious communities render to the populations, in the field of teaching or medical care.

Finally, peace among countries, and particularly on the African continent, is also a matter of concern, and rightly so, for the government and people of Senegal. Aware of the interdependence of nations and anxious about the human rights of your neighbours, your country wishes to help its African partners to subdue violence, which is always springing up again, to overcome the racial discriminations from which they suffer, to settle their conflicts in a reasonable way, and to establish a just and lasting peace among them, if possible without foreign interference.

The stake is an immense and redoubtable one for the happiness and development of African peoples. May God promote the wise and generous contribution which Senegal is capable of making to it! You know the constant solicitude of the Holy See in this field. I am touched by the way in which Your Excellency paid tribute to it.

I wish you yourself, Mr Ambassador, a happy and fruitful mission, and I invoke the assistance of the Almighty on your person, your fellow-countrymen and your rulers.

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