



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. Mr ELTIGANI SALIH FIDAIL,
AMBASSADOR OF SUDAN TO THE HOLY SEE***

Thursday, 24 April 1997

Mr Ambassador,

1. Welcome to the Vatican, where I have the pleasure of greeting Your Excellency for the presentation of the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of the Sudan to the Holy See.

I thank you for your greetings on behalf of President Omer Hassan Ahmed Elbashir and the Sudanese people. I would be grateful if you would kindly convey my best wishes to them for the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation. I pray to the Most High that he will inspire in everyone sentiments of mutual understanding and brotherhood, which will allow a society of greater justice and solidarity to be built, one based on the real recognition of the rights of all its members.

2. In your address you spoke of the efforts the Sudan has made to achieve peace and to guarantee each citizen his rights. It is indeed necessary that all nations truly recognize the basic rights of the person in the diversity of human and religious communities to which they belong. Differences, too often considered a burden or a threat to national unity, on the contrary show the richness and greatness of human nature, created by God so that all who share it might be part of a single human family. Peace is built on true solidarity between individuals and human groups.

3. Mr Ambassador, you have wished to acknowledge the Holy See's contribution to peace. It is the Church's duty tirelessly to recall the inalienable dignity of the human person, whatever his origin, race, sex, culture or religion. This also means that human communities, even when they are

minorities, must be able to exist with their own characteristics, and that it is the duty of the State to recognize their legitimate place by respecting them and by ensuring that differences contribute to the common good. This right to existence includes that of the freedom to turn to the Creator according to one's conscience, to seek the truth and to be able to adhere to it without constraint, as well as to express one's faith freely and publicly, and to have use of places of worship, education and social service in complete security. As I had the opportunity to state to the 50th Assembly of the United Nations, all human communities must be respected in their search to answer to the problem of human life. "Here we can see how important it is to safeguard the fundamental right to freedom of religion and freedom of conscience, as the cornerstones of the structure of human rights and the foundation of every truly free society. No one is permitted to suppress those rights by using coercive power to impose an answer to the mystery of man" (*Address to the United Nations*, 5 October 1995, n. 10; *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, 11 October 1995, p. 9).

4. The dialogue between believers of different religious traditions, to which Catholics are committed, must be each person's effort to create, in the truth, better understanding, so that peace and justice may be firmly established among all citizens. From this perspective, the Catholic Church keenly hopes that Christians and Muslims can work together for the development of their country in mutual respect for one another's convictions and their free expression.

5. Your presence here testifies to your country's desire to give an important place to the spiritual values necessary for building a truly human society. I hope that your mission will help reinforce relations of mutual understanding between the Sudan and the Apostolic See, for the good of all Sudanese, Christians and Muslims.

6. Through you, Mr Ambassador, permit me to greet the Sudan's Catholic community, whose trials and courage I know well. United with its Pastors, may it stand firm in the faith and put its hope in the power of God who hears the calls of the weak and defenceless. I encourage Catholics to witness fervently to Christ's love among their brothers and sisters, in the footsteps of Bl. Bakhita. May they know that the entire Church is in solidarity with all who are suffering in body or soul!

7. As you begin your mission, I offer you my best wishes for its success. Be assured that you will always find here an attentive welcome and cordial understanding from those who work with me.

I invoke a great abundance of Blessings from the Most High on Your Excellency and on all the Sudanese people.

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