



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. MR GILTON BAZILIO CHIWAULA
AMBASSADOR OF MALAWI TO THE HOLY SEE***

Thursday, 16 December 2004

Mr Ambassador,

I am pleased to welcome you to the Vatican and to accept the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Malawi to the Holy See. I would like to express my gratitude for the greetings which you bring from your President, His Excellency Dr Bingu wa Mutharika. Your presence here reminds me of my visit to Malawi in 1989, when I was welcomed with such warmth. I would ask you kindly to convey my cordial greetings to His Excellency and to assure him of my continuing prayers for the peace and well-being of your nation. The people of your Continent have much to offer the rest of the world concerning respect for the family. In this connection, I would encourage them to continue to promote stable family life as the proper environment in which to bring up children, thereby building firm foundations for the future of society. In particular, I would urge your Government to resist any attempts by outside agencies to impose programmes of economic assistance tied to the promotion of sterilization and contraception. Not only are such campaigns "affronts to the dignity of the person and the family" (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 234), but they also undermine the natural growth and progress of nations. However serious the social and health-care problems facing your country and your Continent, the good of your people demands the pursuit of authentic human development, responding not simply to their material needs but also to their cultural, moral and spiritual aspirations. "Development which is merely economic is incapable of setting man free; on the contrary, it will end by enslaving him further" (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 46). The alarmingly rapid spread of AIDS demands renewed efforts on the part of the international community and the Government of Malawi to find acceptable ways of combating the disease and providing proper care for the sick and their families. Public authorities and faith communities need to work together to promote fidelity within marriage and abstinence outside it as the most effective safeguards against infection. Every effort should be made to educate the people about AIDS, so as to deter them from resorting to superstitious and traditional practices which can lead to the further spread of the virus. I thank you for expressing your appreciation of the Church's contribution to health care in your country, and I pledge the continued support of all our Catholic institutions and medical personnel involved in this important work. You have spoken of the part played by the Catholic Bishops in your country's transition to democracy, and I thank you for those gracious words with which you describe the Church as the "conscience" of the Malawi nation. The Catholic Church welcomes the opportunity to cooperate with the Government by

instructing and informing the faithful, "particularly those involved in political life, so that their actions may always serve the integral promotion of the human person and the common good" (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Doctrinal Note on Some Questions Regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life*, 6). Indeed she has a duty to do so, while recognizing the autonomy and independence of the political community in its proper sphere (cf. *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 424). The extreme poverty afflicting so much of the population of Malawi demands urgent action from the rest of the world. I am confident that the Government will strive to do all in its power to provide adequate financial support for all humanitarian and educational programmes. In this regard, every effort must be made to tackle corruption and thus achieve maximum transparency and accountability in the use of international aid. Through her institutes of education and charitable agencies, the Church remains determined to offer whatever assistance she can, so that the citizens of your country may be able to live with proper human dignity. In offering my best wishes for the success of your mission, I would like to assure you that the various departments of the Roman Curia are ready to provide help and support in the fulfilment of your duties. Upon Your Excellency and all the people of Malawi I cordially invoke God's abundant

blessings.

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