



The Holy See

*Address of His Holiness Paul VI
to the first Ambassador of the Republic of Niger to the Holy See**

Thursday, 25 November 1971

Mr President,

We have been deeply touched by the kind words Your Excellency has just addressed to Us. We are particularly pleased to take this occasion to express to Your Excellency and to the noble country you represent Our cordial good wishes and the sentiments of respectful esteem which animate Us and the Catholic community of Niger. In your address to Us, Your Excellency has underlined a certain number of conditions which you consider necessary for true human progress: the important place to be given to spiritual values, solidarity and mutual help in economic development, and the establishment of peace through just ways rather than force.

These are prospects which We have not failed to promote in the international forum, as We did especially in our encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, in Our Message to Africa and in Our allocutions during Our visit to Uganda. Yes, in Our estimation, progress in techniques and even in culture would be vain and doomed to failure were it not combined with the additional awareness of man's divine vocation. The indispensable social organization will only give valid and lasting results in a climate of cooperation and participation of all the vital forces of the country, of interdependent relationships with close neighbours – such as those of the «Conseil de l'Entente» which you have formed – with the friends of Africa, Europe and the rest of the world, thus assuring your just place in the comity of Nations. Finally happiness requires that each person and each social entity with their specific character be respected and that persons overcome narrow individualism or deadly rivalries which can tempt them.

We know and appreciate the efforts Your Excellency makes along this path to hope. The Christians themselves, as you have seen, in spite of their small number only ask to collaborate in whatever can promote economic and social development, literacy and culture, peace and

brotherhood. It is in this tense that the missionaries and the Catholic laity wish to work. We give credit to Your Excellency for the benevolence shown towards them. Then primary concern is to live their faith while respecting the faith of their brothers. But how could they live their faith unless at the same time they give generous testimony of unselfish love which is its necessary corollary; a love spent in service in the footsteps of father Charles of Jesus who was so devoted to the people of your region?

With the hope that these friendly relations may continue and increase, We express to the young Republic of Niger, which has just celebrated its tenth anniversary, Our sincere best wishes. To Your Excellency, whom We have had the joy of welcoming this morning, and to all who have accompanied you here, We express Our respects and heartily invoke upon you and your dear country abundant Blessing of the Almighty

*ORa n.49 p.3.