



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER TO THE AMBASSADOR OF BURUNDI TO THE HOLY SEE*

27 January 1978

Mr. Ambassador,

To express your feelings on this day of the presentation of your Letters of Credence, you found words full of nobility and thoughts about the Catholic Church that we highly appreciated. Receive our heartfelt thanks for that, as well as for the good wishes that you bring us on the part of the Authorities of your country and the people of Burundi as a whole.

We receive you joyfully at the moment when the mission entrusted to you by His Excellency Colonel Jean-Baptiste Bagaza officially begins. It is a mission of friendship, and peace. Is there a more beneficial and exalting task than to endeavour to strengthen even more the mutual ties, the understanding of points of view and trust? You will discover in ourself and our collaborators, in any case, the will to work along this line, in order that questions of common interest may be studied in an atmosphere of great respect, and that adequate solutions may be gradually defined and put into practice. Thus, in a climate of cooperation and mutual sympathy, the relations between the Holy See and the Republic of Burundi will bear even new results, which are the purpose sought.

Your address, we were saying, gave us pleasure for more than one reason. We will call attention particularly to what you said on the subject of peace, of reconciliation and of equality among men without any ideological or religious barrier: a subject that some people tend to consider outworn, like an old refrain, but the topicality of which is recalled by the vicissitudes of the world. Even the African continent is, alas, the scene of revealing confrontations. We referred to this painful problem a few days ago on receiving your colleagues in the Diplomatic Corps. How can we struggle? How can we promote the cause of brotherhood? By force, or with the pressure of arms? Certainly not! The way that opens up to the architects of peace passes, on the contrary, through solidarity, and also through cultural, economic and social development. We rejoice in the

assurance you give us that such is the programme drawn up by your Government, and we cherish the firm hope that Your dear country, in the centre of Africa, may serve as an example and be a real oasis of tranquillity.

Our Catholic sons are numerous among you. They ask only to continue and even to intensify their personal and collective effort for the good of the nation. They do not form a separate entity, it is clear. They are citizens like others and also, we think, good patriots, respectful of civil authority. Their Bishops and their clergy, native or missionary, do not cease to encourage them to be loyal to all matters. That is perhaps one of the secrets of the value of their past contribution – which is the object of our admiration – and of the witness they will bear tomorrow again.

It remains for us, Mt Ambassador, to offer you our heartfelt wishes for you personally, for your family and for the success of your mission. We are very happy to do so, and we address, through Your Excellency, our greetings to the Chief of State and the people of Burundi, on whom we invoke the assistance and the protection of the Almighty.

*ORa n.6 p.2.