



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO H.E. Mr. COMLANVI THÉODORE LOKO
NEW AMBASSADOR OF BENIN TO THE HOLY SEE***

Friday, 28 May 2010

Mr Ambassador,

I welcome you with pleasure at the beginning of your mission to the Holy See and I thank you for the courteous words you have just addressed to me. In return, I would be grateful if you would kindly convey to H.E. Mr Thomas Boni Yayi whose visit I remember well my good wishes for him and for the accomplishment of his lofty mission at the service of the people of Benin. Please also thank him for wishing Benin to have an Ambassador to the Holy See who is resident in Rome. I appreciate this gesture that stresses the excellence of the relations that exist between the Republic of Benin and the Holy See and the high esteem for the Catholic Church of the Beninese people. I also extend my good wishes to the Government and to the other Authorities of your country and to all the Beninese.

In your discourse you have just recalled the late Cardinal Bernardin Gantin. It is already two years since the death of this remarkable man of the Church, who was not only a noble son of your nation but also an authentic builder of bridges between cultures and continents. I am sure that he will be an example for numerous Beninese, particularly the youngest. As for his ecclesial ministry, it will not fail to encourage men and women of the Church to carry out a generous and ever more competent service for the greatest possible good of your beloved country which will be celebrating the 150th anniversary of its evangelization next year.

Twenty years ago, in February 1990, the *Conference of Living Forces of the Nation* was held. This major event that was not only political, but likewise witnessed to the close relationship between the faith and its expression in the public life of Benin determined your future and continues to inspire your present. I ask God to bless the efforts of all who are working to build a society established on justice and peace, in recognition of the rights of all the nation's members. The realization of this ideal requires brotherly union, a love of justice and respect for work.

As protagonists of their own destiny, the people of Benin are asked to encourage an authentic brotherhood. This is a primordial condition for social peace and a factor of integral human advancement. It is a precious pearl that must be preserved and cultivated, banishing divisions that can undermine the unity of the nation and even harmony in families. In the face of such possible causes of destabilization, the values drawn from your cultural patrimony will be an invaluable help in affirming both their identity and their vocation. Among these values I would like to stress in particular respect for the sacred character of life, the consequences of which must be taken into account, especially in the framework of legislation. Brotherhood, a practical expression of the equal dignity of all citizens, is a fundamental principal and a basic virtue for achieving a genuinely fulfilled society because it enables people to make the most of all human and spiritual potential. Brotherhood must also lead to the search for justice, the absence of which is always a cause of social tension and brings numerous harmful consequences. "Peace is threatened when man is not given all that is due him as a human person, when his dignity is not respected and when civil life is not directed to the common good" (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, n. 494*).

The quest for personal interest to the detriment of the common good is an evil that slowly gnaws away at the public institutions, thereby impeding the integral development of the human being. The political, economic and social leaders of a nation must be just. They are, as it were, its "watchful conscience" that guarantees the transparency of its structures and the ethic that motivates every society's life. They must be just. Justice always goes hand in hand with brotherhood. It constitutes a factor of efficiency and social balance, permitting the Beninese to share their human and natural resources, to live a dignified life and to guarantee their children's future.

Work is an important priority in a society's development. Indeed, it is co-existential to the human condition (cf. *ibid., n. 256*) for the human being is totally fulfilled by his work. Love of work ennobles and creates a real symbiosis between people as well as between the human being and the other elements of creation. By dignified work, man can provide for his vital needs and can contribute to building a prosperous, just and fraternal society. Benin's motto: *Brotherhood Justice Work* is therefore like a true compendium of the charter of a nation with high human ideals. Putting them into practice also helps to spread solidarity to other nations. In this regard I would like to address my thanks to all the Beninese for the active brotherhood they showed the people of Haiti at the time of the recent earthquake there.

Through you I would like to offer a warm greeting to the Catholic community of Benin and its Pastors. I encourage them to be, increasingly, authentic witnesses of the faith and brotherly love that Christ teaches us. I would also like to acknowledge the efforts made by all, particularly the Authorities, to consolidate relations of reciprocal respect and esteem among the religious denominations in your country. Religious freedom cannot but help to enrich democracy and foster its development.

At the beginning of your mission as the Head of the Beninese Mission resident in Rome and

accredited to the Holy See, I offer my best wishes to you, Mr Ambassador, as I assure you of the full availability of my collaborators to give you all the help you may need in the fulfilment of your office. I ask God to support the people of Benin and very willingly impart the Apostolic Blessing to you, to your collaborators and to those who are close to you.

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