



The Holy See

***DISCORSO DI GIOVANNI PAOLO II
A S.E. IL SIGNOR MAMADOU MAIGA JOUSSOUFA,
NUOVO AMBASCIATORE DEL NIGER PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE***

Lunedì, 19 giugno 1989

Mr. Ambassador.

Welcome to the Vatican, where I have the joy of receiving Your Excellency as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Niger to the Holy See.

Your presence here gives me great joy, for it witnesses to the desire your country has to continue to exercise in the framework of international relations the particular dynamism of spiritual values by bringing to them the contribution of people whose view of the world is imbued with religious faith.

I am touched by the kind words you have just addressed to me and I was happy to hear you say that your fellow countrymen accord a very special place to solidarity, tolerance, respect for human dignity; in fact, these are paths which lead to peace, which is my very fervent wish for the whole human family.

On this occasion, I am happy to recall the good understanding that characterizes the relationships between the Republic of Niger and the Holy See. I have no doubt but that your mission officially inaugurated on this day, will strengthen still more the bonds of friendship that unite us.

Mr. Ambassador, you were kind enough to refer to the efforts I am making together with my collaborators to come to the aid of the peoples who lack the material goods necessary for a life of human dignity, or who are victims of natural calamities. It is my fervent wish, especially as regards the countries of the Sahel, to encourage «the formation of competent persons who will place themselves at the service of their countries and of their neighbour, without any discrimination, to

promote integral and collective human development, to fight against desertification and its causes and to come to the help of the victims of drought» (Statutes of the John Paul II Foundation for the Sahel, n. 2).

On this occasion, you will allow me to greet the Catholic community of your country. You have underlined the atmosphere of dialogue in the midst of your people who are «steeped in religious traditions», to use your own terms. I thank God for the harmony in the relations between the Muslims and the Christians. In particular, I appreciate the fact that the Republic of Niger plans to propose a juridical framework which will enable the Catholic community to develop and to pursue its activities, with respect for the beliefs of all.

You know, Mr. Ambassador, that the Catholics do not fail to give their loyal co-operation towards the building of the nation. Impelled by their faith, they are eager to join with all the citizens to achieve a society which aims at an ideal of progress. They bring the leaven of the Gospel wherever they live, striving to witness to their fraternal love, in the image of Father Charles de Foucauld who so loved the peoples of your region. It is in this sense that the missionaries, the religious and lay faithful wish to work, collaborating, to the extent of their means, in the areas of education, health and culture.

My thoughts turn now to all the people of Niger and, in the first place, to His Excellency General Ali Saibou, Head of State. I ask you to kindly convey to him my cordial good wishes for the prosperity of Niger as well as for the physical and spiritual well-being of all its inhabitants.

As for you, Mr. Ambassador, I am happy to offer you my best wishes for the success of your exalted mission. Be assured that you will always find here the understanding attention which you may at times need. In expressing my affection for the people of Niger and addressing my respectful greeting to its leaders, I invoke the help of God and the abundance of his benefits on the entire nation.

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