



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF PAUL VI
TO THE AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF GABON
TO THE HOLY SEE***

Thursday, 25 February 1971

Mr. Ambassador,

We thank Your Excellency for the kind words you have just addressed to Us in the name of President Albert Bongo, and We are happy to welcome you here as the representative of your noble country to the Holy See.

The Catholic Church – need we say it – regards Gabon with respectful esteem and great hope. It knows that your country in the heart of Africa has all that is necessary to give its people that material prosperity it needs, thanks to a fertile nature and a rich under-soil. It also knows the possibilities which exist for education and culture among its young people thirsting for knowledge. Finally, it rejoices in the fact that such a large proportion of Gabonese, open to the faith, bear the name of Christian and are happy to belong to the Church.

In this combination of circumstances what do the Catholics wish? What do those responsible seek? What is the wish of the Holy See itself, the centre and bond of the universal Church? Nothing else than to live the faith to the full, with all the requirements attached to it by Christ himself. While respecting the specific legitimate values of life, morals and customs, Christians certainly know how difficult and never-ending is the task to orient their life, morals and customs towards the light of the Gospel and under the influence of grace which will bring out the best in them and preserve them! By acting in this way, the Church as such does not intend to interfere in politics, but believes it can also serve the higher interests of the country. It collaborates willingly in the organization of social life with particular concern for the poor and lowly. It asks only to participate as far as it can in the progress of education by forming hearts and minds to a sense of morality, to unselfish service and to a sense of responsibility. It seeks to promote everywhere

justice, peace and brotherly love among citizens and with their brothers all over the world.

We give credit to the civil authorities of your country for understanding this and for establishing social and encouraging relationships with the ecclesiastical authorities. With the firm hope that these relationships will be fostered and increased in the future for the good of the Church and for all your dear people, We express Our best wishes for Your Excellency's mission and heartily invoke upon you and the President of the Republic of Gabon, as well as upon a the Gabonese people whom you represent, abundant blessings to the Almighty.

*ORa n.10 p.4.
