



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER
TO THE NEW AMBASSADOR OF THE GAMBIA
TO THE HOLY SEE***

Friday, 23 March 1979

Mr Ambassador,

BE ASSURED that the good wishes you bring from the President, the Government and people of the Gambia are much appreciated. I ask you to take back to His Excellency Sir Dawda Kairaba Jawara my own cordial and respectful greetings. Less than a year ago he was received here by my predecessor Paul VI, and thus firsthand he knows the willingness of the Holy See to be of assistance in the great questions of basic needs and human dignity.

You have kindly spoken of "the relentless efforts of the Church" in the sphere of peace and harmony, of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Through your public attestation it is also gratifying to know just how much the contribution of the Catholic Church, from the time of the first missionaries, is appreciated by the Gambian people. Solicitude for the total wellbeing of man will always characterize the Church's activity. Just recently in my first Encyclical I endeavoured to emphasize this fact before the world. In this document I stated that "the Church considers an essential, unbreakably united element of her mission this solicitude for man, for his humanity, for the future of man on earth and therefore also for the course set for the whole of development and progress". In setting forth this principle I thereby intended to maintain absolute fidelity to the Second Vatican Council and continuity with its teaching, wherein man is presented as the centre and summit of all creation.

Thus, Your Excellency will constantly find the Church profoundly solicitous for the destiny of your people and for their true progress. And the motivation of the Church in all her activity was likewise publicly expressed in the words of the Encyclical: "Sine finds the principle of this solicitude in Christ himself". This is why the Church is irrevocably committed to this lofty service of man; this

explains why she cannot reverse her course in history.

With the earnest hope that through your new tasks at the Holy See you will indeed render outstanding service to your country, I assure you of my prayers, invoking upon the authorities and citizens of the Gambia the uplifting blessings of integral development and lasting peace.

**Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II, vol. II 1979 pp. 697-698.*

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