



The Holy See

Apostolic Journey to Cape Verde,

Guinea Bissau, Mali and Burkina Faso

(January 25- February 1, 1990) *To the President of the Republic of Burkina Faso (January 29, 1990)*

Mr. President, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

1. I am very touched by the welcome which Burkina Faso has given me, and I thank you, Mr. President, for the kind words you have just addressed to me. With deference I salute the members of the Government gathered with you, the members of the Diplomatic Corps, as well as the other dignitaries who chose to participate in this ceremony.

Since 1980 when I was able to spend but a few hours in this land. I have desire to return and make renewed contact with a nation for which I have great esteem, by making a pastoral visit to the Catholic Church which is very alive in your country. It is with true joy that I was able to join the large community gathered this morning for the national pilgrimage at Yagma; I would like to express here my fraternal gratitude to Cardinal Zoungana and the other bishops of Burkina for their welcome.

2. Your people, Mr. President, have been able to win the sympathy and respect of many nations of the world, as I can attest. Heirs to a great history, enamoured of lofty moral values, they have been able to keep the best of their traditions in a fraternal spirit.

In recent years your nation has experienced great trials. I pay tribute to the courage and dignity of your compatriots who did not lose heart. They ceaselessly took up, in a spirit of reconciliation of minds and hearts, the necessary tasks for improving their way of life in the economic field as well as in the various sectors of societal life.

3. You know how much attention the Church pays to the requirements of development. Ten years ago I issued an appeal to the international community for solidarity with the peoples of the Sahel, so sorely plagued by drought. This evening I shall have the opportunity to speak once again about these concerns. However, at this time I want to express my fervent best wishes that the people of Burkina Faso will be up to continuing these efforts.

I know that, with the aid of public authorities, your compatriots are devoting themselves to making progress in agriculture, which they are becoming more skilled at, despite the climatic hardships involved. And, since development concerns every aspect of human life, I salute the progress made in providing your young people with an education which allows them to display their talents and embark on an active life under favourable conditions. I also hope that families will have more and more of an opportunity to flourish, respecting the life of the couple and the responsibility of parents, and that the country will be able to provide health care for all those who need it and to give dignified aid to the disabled or those who are less fortunate.

My wish for your co-workers in these difficult tasks, Mr President, is that their work may be effective, thanks to a concerted effort open to all the parties and the selflessness which does honour to those who serve in public office in the interest of the common good.

4. As for Catholics, their faith and their love for the homeland combine to encourage them to take an active part in national life, desiring to work in harmony with their compatriots who belong to other religious communities. They want to enjoy trusting relations with the State, with a recognition of the spiritual dimension of human life and its expression in religious institutions. At the same time, dialogue is helpful for organizing the work of education and professional formation, access to health care services, or activity in favour of development, for which the members of the Church wish to be at the disposal of everyone.

5. Mr. President, I thank you and your collaborators for the arrangements you have made to facilitate the pastoral visit which I have just begun in Burkina Faso. I am grateful for the warm hospitality which you have shown me.

In expressing my wishes that your nation may once again enjoy well-being and prosperity in the peace and due dignity of all its members, I am aware of the road it still must travel. However, I am sure that the profound characteristics of the people of Burkina Faso will allow them to face courageously this age's challenges, by living in fraternal unity.

**L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English n. 8 p.12.*