



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE JOHN XXIII
TO Mr LÉOPOLD SEDAR SENGHOR
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SENEGAL ****

Friday, 5 October 1962

Mr. President, it is a great pleasure for Us today to receive the highest official of a country dear to Us for more than one reason, a country with whom the Holy See has such excellent relations.

Ever since Divine Providence chose to make of Our humble person the successor of St. Peter and the head of Christianity, We have followed the rise of Senegal towards its independence with affectionate solicitude, and We are happy to see it take its proper place in the assembly of nations.

In you, Mr. President, We are pleased to salute a kindly, energetic, and brave people, deeply attached to its noble traditions of community life, permeated by the wisdom of its ancestors, and sensitive to artistic forms. Your country is a land of freedom, where it is good to live. The Church, which develops there freely among other spiritual families, knows this.

Because of its fortunate geographical shape, would not Senegal be one of the convergence points of African territories, as well as a place for approach and reciprocity with old Europe and the other continents? You have known how to heed nature's directions and how to apply yourselves to executing them. We can only rejoice on account of it, We who always have at heart the encouragement of efforts that tend to unite peoples in justice, loyalty, and friendship.

May We also tell you, Mr. President, how much We appreciate the courage with which Senegal is advancing toward a better economic development. Its plan is based on the real resources of the country, and it intends to respect the rights of each person while pursuing, with the co-operation of its sons, the common good of the nation. How could one not eagerly wish your country a prosperity that will contribute to its greatness?

We cannot forget that Senegal was the first among the new independent states of Africa to

establish diplomatic relations with the Holy See. We recognize in this act the desire for fruitful collaboration¹ between your country and the Church, and We are greatly pleased by this.

Finally, We want to confide to you, Mr. President, that yesterday, during Our trip to the sanctuaries of Loreto and of Assisi, your country and all of Africa were particularly present in Our thought, in Our prayers, and in the fervent wishes that We expressed for all nations of the earth.

Your kind visit will therefore remain linked to the remembrance of the waves of joy stirred up throughout the world by the apostolic pilgrimage of the Servant of the servants of the Lord.

Last evening – while the city of Assisi was lighting all its flares as a sign of love for God, of veneration for the Holy Little Poor Man, and of rejoicing over the presence of the Pope beneath the splendors of faith and of art in the Papal Basilica, We recalled the Biblical imagery of flowers that grow and exhale their perfume for the glory of God (cf. Eccles. 39, 17-19). Such, Mr. President, is the bouquet that We offer, this morning by your hands to Senegal and to all Africa, young, strong, so greatly loved.

In these sentiments, We very heartily invoke an abundant shower of divine blessings upon yourself, the members of your government, and the dear Senegalese people, as a sign of Our special benevolence.

**The Pope Speaks*, vol. 8 n°3 p. 231-233.