

Remarks during the Reception at the Nunciature in Lusaka Monday, 9th November 2015

By his Excellency Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher,
Secretary for Relations with States of the Holy See

I am delighted to be here in Lusaka for the celebrations marking 50 years of diplomatic relations between the Holy See and the Republic of Zambia.

With pleasure, I convey to you the greetings of Pope Francis, the Successor of the Apostle Peter, who holds the continent of Africa very much to heart and who, in a few days time, will Himself travel to Kenya, Uganda and the Central African Republic. The visits of the Pope to different countries “*permit [him] to manifest the profound solidarity between the Holy See and the peoples of the world*” (Pope St John Paul II, *Discourse to members of the Diplomatic Corps in Zambia*, 3 May 1989).

In these beautiful lands that make up Zambia, from the time when the first missionaries arrived in the 18th century (1730), the Catholic Church has met with a generous welcome. A welcome extended not only to her missionaries, but above all, to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which they proclaimed with joy.

This has permitted the Church to grow, establishing herself even in the most remote areas of the country. **Next year will mark the 125th anniversary of the foundation of the first Catholic missions, established by the Missionaries of Africa (popularly known as the “White Fathers”), who arrived in district of Kasama in 1891.**

Beginning from those times, the Church has spread everywhere through her educational and health-care institutions.

Indeed before Independence, the Catholic hierarchy of Northern Rhodesia, through the publication of various Pastoral Letters, was united and consistent in supporting peaceful liberation movements. In particular, those Letters of 1953 and 1958 invite reflection on the rights of the native people to govern their own lands, to have access to education, to employment and to adequate medical care. That insistence of the Bishops on the equal dignity of all men and women, on the full participation in social and political life, culminated in the courageous and prophetic invitation to the people of Northern Rhodesia to develop and create a happy and prosperous nation, (overcoming the role of the colonizers). And precisely on October 25th, 1964, the day after Independence, a Pastoral Letter of the Bishops was read in every Catholic Church, exhorting all to dedicate themselves to the good of the newly constituted Zambia.

On the 7th of November 1964, the first President of the Republic of Zambia, Dr Kenneth Kaunda, was received in audience by Pope Paul VI who, in joyfully welcoming him, said: “*We were happy to note, in Your Excellency’s Independence discourses, your insistence on recognition of the rights and dignity of the human person, as the only true basis for harmony and peace in your country, as in the whole world*” (Paolo VI, *Udienza al Presidente dello Zambia*, 7 November 1964).

Precisely to support the efforts of Zambian Catholics in the construction of this Country and to give impetus to the recognition of the rights and dignity of the human person, the following year – and the exact date was the 27th of October 1965 – Pope Paul VI erected the Apostolic Nunciature, with the nomination of the first Apostolic Nuncio, in the person of Archbishop Alfredo Poledrini, thus establishing diplomatic relations with the Republic of Zambia, which in turn nominated His Excellency Mr Simon Chikwanda Katilungu as its first Ambassador to the Holy See.



Honourable Harry Kalaka, Minister of Foreign Affairs, His Excellencies Julio Murat, Apostolic Nuncio and Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher.

On an occasion such as this, one may ask why the Successor of Peter needs to have diplomatic relation with states.

Your Excellencies, Ladies & Gentlemen, it must be remembered that the Holy See, almost from the beginning of its history, has exercised the right of legation, (*that is the right to send and receive official representatives*), and when, towards the end of the 15th century, nation States began to emerge, the Pope exchanged representatives with them. Thus, Pontifical diplomacy is one of the most ancient diplomatic realities in the world.

Thereby, the Holy See has participated in the International Community from its very origins, and in that manner has contributed, through the centuries, to the formation of the practices and the proper institutions of diplomatic life.

The Holy See's diplomatic activity then has two particular characteristics: the first is found in the very fact of the *international juridical capacity of the Holy See*, which the international community recognizes, in virtue of the Holy See's spiritual authority and in as much as it constitutes the central governing organ of the Catholic Church, apart altogether from the existence of a territorial State, which may assure and guarantee its independence of action.

The second characteristic corresponds to the *universal vocation of the Apostolic See*, which is distinct from the particularity of various States. In this sense Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State of His Holiness, in a recent lecture concerning pontifical diplomacy affirmed that the diplomacy of the Holy See "*is called to act in facilitating co-existence and a common life among the various nations, in promoting that fraternity among peoples, where the term fraternity is synonymous with effective collaboration, with true cooperation, agreed and ordered, with a structured solidarity that favours the common good and the good of each member*" (cfr. *Lectio Magistralis* of the Cardinal Secretary of State at the "Dies Academicus" of the Pontifical Gregorian University, 11.03.2015).

In such a context also, the ecclesial function pursued by the diplomatic activity of the Holy See is to be understood and oriented. That function, in fact, other than being "*the instrument of communion that unites the Roman Pontiff to the Bishops at the head of the particular churches or that acts to guarantee the life of the local Churches with respect to the civil Authorities*" (cfr. *Lectio Magistralis*, op. cit.), is also at the service of the human family, beyond every form of partisan affiliation, through the promotion of a development that flows from justice and international peace.

This is why certain activities of the Church and of the States come together with one another.



Apostolic Nunciature in Lusaka.

Your Excellencies, my dear Friends, this bond with the Apostolic See, 50 years of which we celebrate today, is inserted here into the vibrant and active fabric of Zambian life, and has contributed – as it contributes still – to the promotion of freedom of activity for the Church and the dignity of the human person. Such relations have seen the fruitful growth of the Catholic Church, with her institutions open to all, without distinction and without any other aim, save that of the progress and the care of the dignity of each person.

In these 50 years, the active role of the Catholic Church in Zambia has been appreciated and recognized by successive governments. We are grateful to the various Presidents, for such respectful relations and recognition.

By reason of the Christian quality that has always characterized the identity of the country, and of which Zambia is proud, being a champion of the values of unity, peace and equality, it is unthinkable that the weak and the poor should be left behind. Any project for development must start with them and be directed to them, knowing that the one who believes in Christ cannot but be concerned for the poor. The Church hears the cry of the poor, because they are her members and in her they find solace. The Church, as is proper to her nature, *“can never be dispensed from the exercise of charity, as an activity organized by the faithful”* (Benedict XVI, *Deus caritas est* 29).

It is not an action reserved to the Church alone, but rather all are called to cooperate for the development of each human being. Such a project implies: *“... working to eliminate the structural causes of poverty and to promote the integral development of the poor, as well as small daily acts of solidarity in meeting the real needs which we encounter”* (Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 188).

In such a project the Catholic Church is happy to collaborate, as she always has done and will continue to do, in the hope of building a country ever more beautiful and vigorous, where the care of the environment is an integral part of development, as the Holy Father Pope Francis recently reminded us in his Encyclical Letter: *“Love, overflowing with small gestures of mutual care, is also civic and political, and it makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world. Love for society and commitment to the common good are outstanding expressions of a charity which affects not only relationships between individuals but also “macro-relationships, social, economic and political ones””* (Pope Francis, *Laudato sii*, 231).

Toast: *In light of this, I invite the esteem guests, the priests, the religious men and women, and the friends of the Nunciature to raise your glasses with me and to join in a toast to the good relations between the Holy See and the Republic of Zambia, as well as to the good health of President Edgar Chagwa Lungu and the Holy Father, Pope Francis.*