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**RECEPTION on the 4th Anniversary
of the Pontificate of His Holiness**

Pope BENEDICT XVI

National Day of the Holy See-Vatican

Apostolic Nunciature Lusaka

24 April 2009

Speech of His Excellency

Archbishop NICOLA GIRASOLI

Apostolic Nuncio in Zambia

H.E. Hon. Felix C. Mutati, Minister of Commerce, Trade and Industry
Guest of Honor.

Your Excellencies – Ambassadors and High
Commissioners accredited to Zambia

Judicial, Political, Military Authorities, Members of the Parliament
of the Republic of Zambia.

Your Graces and Lordships – Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church of
Zambia.

Dear diocesan priests, missionaries and members of male and female
Religious Congregations.

Representatives of the Clergy and Members of various Religious
Communities

Ladies and Gentlemen
Dear guests and friends

The National Day of the Holy See and Vatican marks this year the 4th Anniversary of the Pontificate of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI, Thank you Honorable Minister for your presence as representative of the Government of Zambia, and I would like to thank you all, for having responded to my invitation for celebrating joyfully this important occasion.

As a sovereign moral power in the world, the Holy See-Vatican enjoys international recognition by so many nations and different cultures. Besides being the central government of the universal Church, the Vatican plays an active role in the world-wide community of peoples and offers its genuine co-operation and partnership in various areas of international interest concerns.

As usual on these occasions, we take also the opportunity to look at the situation and the climate of the relations between Church and State.

I am happy to say that the relations between Zambia and the Holy See-Vatican are good and cordial. All the Institutional Personalities at all levels in Zambia continue to acknowledge the great support that the Catholic Church offers to all Zambians, regardless of their religious affiliation, especially in the sectors of health and education. In fact, the Catholic Church in Zambia is well known for contributing towards the socio-economic needs of society as demonstrated by the high number of hospitals, clinics, hospices, schools of all grades (including the newly established Zambian Catholic University in Kalulushi – Kitwe) especially in the rural and remote areas of the Country. The Catholic Church is one of the major partners of the Government in health and education development.

I wish to underline that Church and Government have one common purpose: to serve the people although in a different way.

Different points of views, anyway, are always an enrichment for democracy and the best way to overcome differences and

strengthen unity is to dialogue. A true dialogue means to look forward and not to be restrained by the past. Zambia needs to look forward. This concretely means that Government and opposition parties as well as the civil society, in general, have to do their best to remove all kind of prejudices. In fact with prejudices there can be no dialogue, but only sterile talks.

We should always encourage dialogue in whatever form so that the culture of sharing knowledge can be developed in Zambia. That is why every initiative to dialogue should be welcomed. **Today I humbly make an appeal to all political parties, to the opposition, to civil society groups and the Churches to never shun dialogue with the Government and the Public Institutions. In fact “*only a stable political climate can foster economic growth and socio-cultural development*”** (Working Document for the next African Synod of Bishops for Africa, scheduled on October 4-25, 2009 in Rome. *IL Chapter 1.II.2*).

This also means that to acknowledge or to admit a mistake is never a sign of weakness, but always a sign of democracy and maturity.

The aim of the Catholic Church as well as of all the other Christian denominations and Religious institutions is always to be the voice of the voiceless, to be always on the side of those who are in need: the poorest, the homeless, the sick and to support those who have lost any hope for a better future. Churches will always remain a prophetic voice, which means according to the words of the Holy Bible Christians are called “*to be the yeast which ferments the whole batch*” (Cf. Gal 5.9 and 1Cor 5,6-8).

This is why we as Christians should prefer more the idea of promoting Zambia as a Nation of Christians, instead of the idea of Zambia as a Christian Nation.

Politic belongs to politicians and more in general to civil society. In social issues, Churches should be the guardian of Human

Rights, avoiding any kind of involvement in partisan political debates. Churches are called to promote, to protect and to defend human dignity. **We all know that Human Rights are not negotiable: we can negotiate everything except human rights.**

Pope Benedict XVI entitled the Message for Celebration of the World Day of Peace, this year (1st January 2009) “***Fighting poverty to build peace***”. Poverty is often a contributory factor or a compounding element in conflicts. Pope Benedict XVI considers that the “*current food crisis is characterized not so much by a shortage of food, as by difficulty in gaining access to it and by different forms of speculation*”.

The poor as individuals and as peoples are never a burden, for a society or for a country, but they are respectful human beings “*who ask for the right to share material goods and to make a good use of their capacity for work*”.

In the current delicate global financial crisis we all are called to form one family in which all individuals, peoples and nations model their behavior according to the principles of fraternity and responsibility. **There is need of a “global solidarity”** between rich and poor countries, in order to avoid marginalization. Wealth creation in poor countries therefore becomes an inescapable duty. As Diplomats and Representatives of our Countries, we especially are called to work in a special way to offer our tireless efforts for contributing to promote and to strengthen unity and solidarity in this beloved Country of Zambia.

In relation with the Government, the Catholic Church would like always to bring to national issues a constructive contribution in order to strengthen unity and peace in this Country. I take this opportunity to thank H.E. Mr. Rupiah Banda, President of the Republic of Zambia, and his Government, for stating that they aim at reducing poverty and fighting corruption in Zambia. **I would humbly recommend to continue to put in place measures to achieve a more visible fight against corruption and for**

reduction of poverty as the best way to promote an equitable development of the Country.

I avail myself of this opportunity today to thank all our priests, missionaries, religious nuns, members of religious congregations, lay people and volunteers directly involved in our Catholic institutions, especially those working in rural and remote areas of the country with a shortage of financial means, for their tireless and dedicated work in favor of the Zambian people.

This year, marks the 20th anniversary of the Official Visit of the Servant of God Pope John Paul II to Zambia (2-4 May 1989) for this special occasion I shall hand the Vatican Decoration of the Cross “*Pro Ecclesia and Pontifice*” to some distinguished missionaries and lay people from Mpika, Ndola and Lusaka. This is an honor granted to them by the Vatican for their dedicated work for the Church and the people of Zambia.

Let me express our hope that the Roman Catholic Church – all her committed members and co-workers – together with other Christian denominations and all other religious Institutions, may continue to live and labor peacefully in this Country for the benefit of all Zambians.

Honorable Guest of Honor, Dear Ladies and Gentlemen, it is now my pleasure and privilege to invite you to join me in a toast to the good health and constant well-being of H.E. Mr. Rupiah Banda, President of the Republic of Zambia, and to the prosperity of the good, friendly and peace-loving people of Zambia.

