



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO INDONESIA, PAPUA NEW GUINEA,
TIMOR-LESTE AND SINGAPORE
(2-13 September 2024)

MEETING WITH THE AUTHORITIES, CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS

“APEC Haus” (Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea)
Saturday, 7 September 2024

[Multimedia]

*Your Excellency, Mr Governor General,
Mr Prime Minister,
Distinguished Representatives of Civil Society,
Esteemed Ambassadors,
Ladies and Gentlemen!*

I am pleased to be with you today and to visit Papua New Guinea. I thank the Governor General for his cordial words of welcome and I thank all of you for your warm reception. I extend my greetings to the people of the country, wishing them peace and prosperity. And I also express my gratitude to the Authorities for helping the Church, in a spirit of mutual cooperation and for the benefit of the common good, as she carries out many activities.

In your homeland, an archipelago with hundreds of islands, more than eight hundred languages are spoken, corresponding to just as many ethnic groups. This points to an *extraordinary cultural and human richness*. I must confess that this greatly fascinates me, also on a spiritual level, because I imagine that this enormous variety is a challenge to the Holy Spirit, who creates

harmony amid differences!

Your country, besides consisting of islands and languages, is also rich in natural resources. These goods *are destined by God for the entire community*. Even if outside experts and large international companies must be involved in the harnessing of these resources, it is only right that the needs of local people are given due consideration when distributing the proceeds and employing workers, in order to improve their living conditions.

These environmental and cultural treasures represent at the same time a great *responsibility*, because they require everyone, civil authorities and all citizens, to promote initiatives that develop natural and human resources in a sustainable and equitable manner. A manner that improves the wellbeing of all, excluding nobody, through concrete programmes, international cooperation, mutual respect and agreements beneficial to all parties.

A necessary condition for such lasting results is the *stability of institutions*, which is fostered by *agreement* on certain essential points amidst different concepts and sensibilities present in society. Indeed, increasing institutional stability and building consensus on fundamental choices is a prerequisite for integral and fair development. It also requires a long-term vision and a climate of cooperation among all, even if there is a distinction of roles and differences of opinion.

It is my particular hope that tribal violence will come to an end, for it causes many victims, prevents people from living in peace and hinders development. I appeal, therefore, to everyone's sense of responsibility to stop the spiral of violence and instead resolutely embark on the path that leads to fruitful cooperation for the benefit of all the people of the country.

Indeed, the aforementioned attitudes can create the conditions in which the question of the status of Bougainville Island can also find a definitive solution while avoiding the rekindling of ancient tensions.

By bolstering agreement on the foundational elements of civil society, together with the willingness of each person to sacrifice something from his or her point of view for the benefit of all, the necessary forces can be utilized to improve infrastructure, address the health and educational needs of the population and increase opportunities for dignified work.

Sometimes we forget that human beings need more than just the basic necessities of life. They also need *great hope in their hearts*. This allows them to live fully, giving them zest and courage to undertake wide-ranging projects, and enables them to lift their gaze upward toward vast horizons.

An abundance of material goods is not enough to give birth to a life-giving, serene, hard-working and joyful society, which without a broader spiritual outlook turns in on itself and leads to a dryness of heart. As a result, society loses its way and forgets the correct hierarchy of values.

Moreover, this dryness takes away society's drive to move forward and, as happens in some opulent societies, blocks its progress to the extent that it loses hope in the future and can no longer find reasons to pass on life.

That is why it is necessary to direct the spirit toward greater realities. Our attitudes and actions must be sustained by an inner strength, which shelters them from the risk of being corrupted or of losing the ability to recognize the value of work and the need to carry it out with dedication and devotion.

Spiritual values greatly influence the building of the earthly city and all temporal realities. In other words, these values infuse a soul, and inspire and strengthen every project. This is also highlighted in *the logo and theme* of my Journey to Papua New Guinea. The motto sums this up in one word: *Pray*. Perhaps some who are overly concerned with "political correctness" are surprised by this choice. If so, they are mistaken, because a people that prays has a future, drawing strength and hope from above. Even the image of the *bird of paradise* on the logo of the Journey is a symbol of freedom: a freedom that no one and nothing can stifle because it is within us, and is guarded by God who is love and wants his children to be free.

For all those who profess to be *Christians* – the vast majority of your people – I fervently hope that faith will never be reduced just to the observance of rituals and precepts. May it be marked instead by love, love of Jesus Christ and following him as a disciple. In this way, faith can become a lived culture, inspiring minds and actions and becoming a beacon of light that illuminates the path forward. At the same time, faith can also help society as a whole to grow and find good and effective solutions to its greatest challenges.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, I have come here to encourage the Catholic faithful to continue their journey and to confirm them in their profession of faith. I have come to rejoice with them in the progress they are making and to share their difficulties. I am here, as Saint Paul would say, as a "worker with you for your joy" (2 Cor 1:24).

I commend the Christian communities for the works of charity they are carrying out in the country. I also urge them always to seek cooperation with public institutions and with all people of good will, beginning with their brothers and sisters belonging to other Christian denominations and other religions, for the sake of the common good of all the citizens of Papua New Guinea.

The shining witness of Blessed Peter To Rot – as Saint John Paul II stated during the Mass for his Beatification – "shows you how to put yourselves generously at the service of others [...] and to ensure that society develops in honesty and justice, harmony and solidarity" (*Homily*, Port Moresby, 17 January 1995). May his example, together with that of Blessed John Mazzucconi, PIME, and all the missionaries who have proclaimed the Gospel in your land, give you strength and hope.

May Saint Michael the Archangel, heavenly patron of Papua New Guinea, always watch over you, defend you from all danger and protect the Authorities and all the people of this country.

Your Excellency, you spoke about women. Let us not forget that it is they who move a country forward. Women have the strength to give life, to build, to make a nation grow. Let us not forget that women are at the forefront of human and spiritual development.

Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen!

I begin my visit among you with joy. I thank you for opening to me the doors of your beautiful country, so far from Rome and yet so *close to the heart of the Catholic Church*. For in the heart of the Church is the love of Jesus Christ, who on the cross embraced all men and women. His Gospel is for all peoples, for it is not tied to any earthly power, but is free to nourish every culture and make the Kingdom of God grow in the world. The Gospel is inculturated and cultures need to be evangelized. May this Kingdom of God be fully welcomed in this land, so that *all the peoples* of Papua New Guinea, with the *variety* of traditions, may live together in *harmony* and offer the world an example of *fraternity*. Thank you very much.