



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY
TO MADAGASCAR, LA RÉUNION,
ZAMBIA AND MALAWI

HOLY MASS FOR THE FAITHFUL
OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF LUSAKA

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

Cathedral of Lusaka (Zambia)

Thursday, 4 May 1989

“You will receive the power of the Holy Spirit which will come on you, and then you will be my witnesses” (Act. 1, 8).

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. Today is the fortieth day after Christ's Resurrection. As he leaves this world in order to return to the Father, Jesus promises the Apostles once again that the Holy Spirit will come upon them. The Spirit will be their Paraclete, their new Advocate and Helper. He will be for them the source of power that overcomes human weakness. *You will receive his power*, “and then you will be my witnesses not only in Jerusalem but throughout Judea and Samaria, and indeed to earth's remotest end” (Act. 1, 8).

With this promise *Christ goes to the Father*. The apostles will see the words of their Master – the last words that he spoke to them – become a reality. *They will receive the power of the Holy Spirit*, and on that day Jerusalem will hear their testimony to Christ crucified and risen.

From this saving truth *the Church will be born*. She will be born through the faith and baptism of those who are the first to welcome the word of God proclaimed by the apostles. *From that time on*

the Church will be born constantly not only in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, but in ever new places, "to earth's remotest end".

2. The time was also to come when from that apostolic message and apostolic labour the same Church of Christ would be born *here, in Zambia*. Today we look back with praise and thanksgiving to the origins of the Church in your country.

The evangelization of Zambia took place mainly from 1879 to 1930, thanks to the heroic efforts of *the White Fathers, the Jesuits and the Franciscan Conventuals and Capuchins* in different parts of the country.

An important milestone was the opening of the first Catholic parish by the White Fathers in 1891. Another was the episcopal ordination of this *region's first bishop, Joseph Dupont, a White Father from France. He was ordained on Zambian soil among the Zambian people at the Kayambi Mission*. Just thirty years ago *Lusaka* became an Archdiocese and the Metropolitan See for the whole country, a distinction it now shares with Kasama.

Today members of many missionary Institutes come here to further the work of evangelization – not only priests, but religious brothers and many sisters as well. The missionary labours of the past century have been crowned by an increasing number of *vocations to the priesthood and religious life* from among the sons and daughters of Zambia itself, as the roots of the Gospel sink deeper in the rich soil of your country.

"It is not for you to know the times or dates that the Father has decided by his own authority" (Act. 1, 7). The whole of future time is embraced by the eternal mind of the Father and by his power, even to the last day. This includes the day fixed for the beginning of the Church's history in your land.

Thus we can say that the Church here was also born on Pentecost Day, when the apostles received the power of the Holy Spirit and began their testimony to Christ, the testimony which extends over generations and centuries.

3. *Today we give thanks to the living God: the Father, Son and Holy Spirit*. We are grateful for all those who have gone before you, in particular the missionaries who are truly your "fathers in Christ" and whose memory lives on in the Church's witness to the Gospel in Zambia. You, dear brothers and sisters, are the living stones of the house they built through the power of the Holy Spirit.

It is fitting that we make our act of thanksgiving on this spot *in your nation's capital where a new Catholic Cathedral* is to be built. The blessing of the cornerstone symbolizes the beginning of a building made up of many stones. The construction of a house of worship devoted to the living

God always has its *beginning in Christ for he is the cornerstone, the "keystone"*.

From Christ's Cross and Resurrection we derive that power of the Holy Spirit which was manifested on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem. It is a power that *the Church in Zambia constantly receives* in order to become an ever more mature witness to Christ crucified and risen. "For *there is no other name* under heaven *given* among men by which we must be saved" (*Ibid.* 4, 12).

4. The same power of the Holy Spirit to which we owe the building up of the Church in Zambia is also the source of every baptized person's transformation according to the model of Christ himself. Christ is the living model of the new man, of the man who incarnates and manifests by his life *the truth of the Beatitudes* in today's Gospel.

We are told that we will be truly blessed if we imitate Christ by *letting God's love transform every situation of human weakness, need and suffering*. Only faith in a Crucified and Risen Saviour makes it possible for us to think of ourselves as blessed when we are poor, in mourning or persecuted. Only the victory of Christ can ensure the blessedness of those who are *gentle, merciful, pure of heart and eager for honesty and peace*.

The Beatitudes challenge us to overcome human weakness, need and suffering through the transforming power of the Spirit. At the same time they teach us to judge our success not in material terms alone, but *by applying the measure of love to individual human hearts* even in situations of injustice, sinfulness and despair.

Dear brothers and sisters: Christ invites you and the whole Church to *live the Beatitudes*. He asks those who are rich to remember that in God's eyes it is the poor who are blessed. He invites them to change their hearts, to be spiritually detached from material things, to *take an interest in the poor*, to commit themselves to working for a more just society. The poor, in their turn, must not lose confidence in their dignity and vocation as God's children, nor think that for lack of worldly goods they are excluded from blessedness in the sight of God. *Hatred is never justified* even in the midst of dire need or injustice.

The Church proclaims *a message of hope to those of you who suffer* in Zambia today, whether physically or spiritually: to the sick and dying, especially the victims of AIDS, and to those who lack medical care; to the many young people who are unemployed for lack of education or job opportunities; to those who are refugees as a result of social upheaval. She pledges herself to continue working with other Christians and all people of good will to help change things for the better. But *above all the Church offers you Christ*. In him, evil and suffering are overcome at their very roots, through the forgiveness of sins.

Every person who is baptized can and must be spiritually transformed in the power of the Holy

Spirit according to the model and ideal found in Christ. *The Holy Spirit is at work in the human "heart": in each person's inmost self.*

5. *At the same time the Holy Spirit also unites people with one another.* He "gathers together" the *People of God*, as we read in the Prophet Jeremiah: "I will... gather you from all the nations and all... places" (*Ier. 29, 14*).

Dear brothers and sisters: are you not "gathered together" in this way from different places in your vast country, you who make up the Church in Zambia? And are you not likewise "gathered together" in the universal Church, which stretches "to earth's remotest end" – gathered "from all the nations"?

This "gathering together" responds to the deep desire of every person *to live in communion*, in fellowship with others. As the theme of my pastoral visit expresses it. we seek to grow "together in Christ, our hope": together with others in Zambia, together with all our brothers and sisters in faith throughout the world.

I urge you in the face of many social changes not to lose *the sense of belonging and of sharing* that have always been an important part of life in Zambia. Without these supports the human community breaks down and its collective moral strength is lost. I also urge you to renew those great *traditional values* which lead family to share with family, village with village, and chieftainship with chieftainship.

May the "communion in the Holy Spirit" for which the Church prays continue to work in you, sons and daughters of Zambia. May it enable you to *overcome divisions* in the midst of the great Christian family. May it "gather together" and *unite all of you in conformity with God's designs* which, in the words of the Prophet Jeremiah, are "plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope" (*Ibid. 29, 11*).

6. "You will call upon me" says the Lord through the Prophet, "and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me; when you seek me with all your heart, I will be found by you" (*Ier. 29, 12-14*). This is an invitation to prayer that is always offered to everyone, but it is fulfilled in an exceptional way in *the fervent prayer of those in the Upper Room in Jerusalem*, The apostles and disciples of the Lord "with one accord devoted themselves to prayer, together with... Mary, the Mother of Jesus" (*Act. 1, 14*). By means of this prayer they prepared themselves to receive the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. And their prayer was heard.

Keeping in mind this prayer, which implored the gift of the Spirit so that the Church born on the Cross might be manifested to the world, *we who are here* are gathered together around the Mother of God, who prays with us and for us. As the apostles invited her to the Upper Room, so we too have invited her here. Let us turn to her now in prayer and *entrust to her maternal*

protection your country and your local Churches.

7. Blessed Mary, you are the Queen of the Apostles and our model of prayer in the Upper Room on the eve of Pentecost. Look with kindness upon *this land of Zambia*, upon all *its people and their leaders*. As children of one Heavenly Father, they wish to come closer to him and to do his will. They are striving to work together for the good of all. Help them, Blessed Lady, to *grow in their love of God and neighbour*.

Queen of Peace, inspire all the citizens of this land to be truly grateful for the blessings of peace which they enjoy. May they always *live in harmony* with one another and with other nations. We ask you to intercede for the many people in Africa who suffer from *war and violence, injustice and oppression*, and from social and economic hardship.

Chosen by God as a highly favoured daughter “full of grace”, you brought forth the Saviour. Open the hearts of all the people of Zambia to the *dignity and vocation of every human person* created and redeemed by God. Keep their families strong and *help the young* to find their rightful place in society. Through human and Christian love may justice grow and flourish in this land.

Mother of the Church, I entrust to you today all the *bishops, priests, men and women religious and laity* who form the local Churches in Zambia. At this liturgy I commend to you in a special way Archbishop Mung’andu and the Archdiocese of Lusaka. May all the Christian faithful here live the Beatitudes in imitation of your Son. May they *work together* to build up the one Body of Christ.

The laity of Zambia look to you as the Help of Christians to lead them to *greater love and understanding of their Catholic Faith*. They invoke your intercession as they seek to transform society with the love of Christ. Intercede for them and obtain for them *an increase of vocations to the priesthood and religious life* among their sons and daughters, for the service of the Church.

Mother of Sorrows, at the foot of the Cross you never lost hope in God’s power to save. Be close to all who suffer in Zambia today: *those with family problems, the refugees, the poor and unemployed*. Bring comfort to the *sick and dying*. May they receive compassion from others and put all their trust in God.

We turn to you, Mother, as *our refuge and hope* on this our earthly pilgrimage. You are the Queen of Hope, and we entrust ourselves to you this day. As you once prayed for the promised gift of the Holy Spirit in the midst of the apostles, pray now for us, that through the power of the same Spirit we may truly be *witnesses to Christ, your Son*. To him be glory for ever. Amen.

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana