



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC PILGRIMAGE TO AFRICA

(MAY 2-12, 1980)

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II IN THE CATHEDRAL OF NAIROBI

Nairobi (Kenya)

Tuesday, 6 May 1980

*Your Eminence, zealous Pastor of this beloved Church of Nairobi,
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate,
Sons and daughters of Kenya,
My brothers and sisters in Christ,*

1. My first desire in this House of God is to express the Church's praise for the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has gathered us together in his Son, sending forth his Holy Spirit into our midst.

In the words of the Apostle Peter: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead..."^[1].

2. Today in this Cathedral dedicated to the Holy Family - to Jesus, Mary and Joseph - all of us realize that together we make up the Body of Christ, together we are the Church. We are a living Church, a spiritual house made up of living stones - all of us live in Christ. We are one with all our brothers and sisters here in Kenya and throughout the world; we are one in the communion of Saints, one with the living and the dead - our families, our ancestors, those who brought to us the word of God and whose memory is enshrined for ever in our hearts.

Today, in particular, we are a communion of faith and love, confessing Jesus Christ as the Son of God, the Lord of history, the Redeemer of man and the Saviour of the whole world. We are one

united community, living, in the mystery of the Church, the life of the crucified and Risen Christ, and therefore his praise is in our hearts and on our lips. It finds expression in our Easter *Alleluia*. We are, as it were, the extended Holy Family, called to build and enlarge the edifice of justice and peace and the civilization of love.

3. Because of this we are challenged to live a life worthy of our calling as members of Christ's Body and as brothers and sisters of Christ in accord with our Christian dignity and duty to walk humbly and peacefully together along the path of life. Jesus himself exhorts us to be, by our lives, the salt of the earth and the light of the world. With him I say to you: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven"[2].

4. Each one of us has a unique place in the communion of the one universal Church throughout Africa and the whole world. You, the laity, pursuing a vocation of holiness and love, have a particular responsibility for the consecration of the world. Through you the Gospel must reach all levels of society. In imitation of the Holy Family, you parents and children must build a community of love and understanding, where the joys and hopes and sorrows of life are shared together, and offered to God in prayer. You couples must be the sign of God's faithful and unbreakable love for his people, and of Christ's love for his Church. It is you who have the great mission of giving Christ to each other and to your children, and in this way you are the first catechists of your children. I greet also all the catechists who serve the Church of God so devotedly. And you young people who are preparing for the priesthood or religious life are called to believe in the power of Christ's grace in your lives. The Lord needs you to carry on this work of redemption among your brothers and sisters.

You religious, both men and women, through the profession of the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience are called to give an effective witness to Christ's Kingdom, the fullness of which is to be revealed only at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. You are called, in a life of joyful consecration and permanent commitment, to be a sign of holiness in the Church, and therefore a sign of encouragement and hope to all the People of God. You are, moreover, in a position to make a great contribution to the Church's apostate by your activities and your life of prayer. In fulfilling this mission the measure of your effectiveness will be in the proportion that you remain united with the Bishops and work in close union with them. And you, my brothers in the priesthood, yours is a mission of proclaiming salvation, of building up the Church by the Eucharistic sacrifice; yours is a vocation of special companionship with Christ, offering your lives in celibacy in order to be like Jesus, the Good Shepherd in the midst of your people - the people of Kenya.

And finally, my dear brother Bishops, in union with the whole Episcopal College that is united with the Successor of Peter, you are called to exercise the pastoral leadership of the whole flock in the name of Jesus Christ, "the chief Shepherd"[3]; yours is therefore a role of special servanthood. You are the appointed guardians of the unity that we are living and experiencing today, because

you are the guardians of God's word upon which all unity is based. And, in a particular way, dear Cardinal Otunga, by reason of your eminent position, you are yourself a visible link with the See of Rome, and a special sign of Catholic unity within your local Church. I am deeply grateful for your fidelity and for your devoted collaboration.

5. And so let us all, as one redeemed people, one Body of Christ, one Church, stand firm together in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, acknowledging him as "God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God". With Saint Peter, let us say to Jesus: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God"^[4]. And again: "You have the words of eternal life"^[5].

And on my part as the Successor of Peter, I have come to you today to repeat Christ's words of eternal life, to proclaim his message of salvation and hope, and to offer all of you his peace: "Peace to all of you who are in Christ"^[6].

Peace to the living.

Peace to the dead, to all those who have gone before us with the sign of faith.

Peace to all Kenya. Peace to all Africa - the peace of Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

[1] *1 Petr.* 1, 3.

[2] *Matth.* 5, 16.

[3] *1 Petr.* 5, 4.

[4] *Matth.* 16, 16.

[5] *Io.* 6, 68.

[6] *1 Petr.* 5, 14.

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