



# The Holy See

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## APOSTOLIC PILGRIMAGE TO AFRICA

(MAY 2-12, 1980)

### **ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE BISHOPS COMING FROM OTHER AFRICAN DIOCESES**

*Kumasi (Ghana)*

*Friday, 9 May 1980*

*My dear Brother Bishops,*

1. It is a joy for me to be with you today. You have come from your respective Dioceses - and I from Rome - and all of us have assembled here in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We truly feel his presence in our midst. Indeed, we have come to Ghana to celebrate his Gospel, to celebrate the centenary of the implantation of his Church in this region. Our thoughts are turned therefore to the great reality of evangelization. This is very natural for us, since we are the Successors of the Twelve and, like them, are called to be servants of the Gospel, proclaiming Jesus Christ and his message of Redemption.

Our ministry makes many demands on us. The effective preaching of the Gospel, which is "the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith"<sup>[1]</sup>, requires our constant efforts in going out to the People of God with a deep understanding of their culture, their pastoral needs and the pressures put upon them by the modern world.

Evangelization requires farsighted planning on our part, the utilization of the proper means and the full collaboration of the local Churches. But I wish to limit myself today to a brief consideration on *the content of evangelization*, on what Paul VI called its "foundation and centre" and what he described as being "a clear proclamation that in Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man, who died and rose from the dead, salvation is offered to all men as a gift of God's grace and mercy"<sup>[2]</sup>.

2. As Bishops we must reflect not only on our duty, but also on the *immense privilege* it is to bring this fundamental message of salvation to the people. This is the nature of our divine mission, this explains our human fulfilment: *to proclaim salvation in Jesus Christ*.

What a wonderful ministry it is to preach a Gospel of redemption in Jesus, to explain to our people how they have been chosen by God the Father to live in Christ Jesus, how the Father "rescued us from the power of darkness and brought us into the Kingdom of his beloved Son. Through him we have redemption, the forgiveness of our sins"[3].

3. Christ's gift of salvation gives rise to our sacramental ministry and to all our efforts to build up the communion of the Church, a redeemed community living the new life of Christ. Because our message is the message of salvation, it is also a constant invitation to our people to respond to God's gift, to live a life worthy of the calling that they have received[4].

The message of salvation brings with it an invitation to our people to praise God for his goodness, to rejoice in his gift, to forgive others just as they themselves have been forgiven, and to love others just as they themselves have been loved. God gives this great gift of salvation through his Church, *through our ministry*.

In accordance with God's will, let us go forward in our evangelizing activities, announcing with perseverance the Good News of salvation, and proclaiming explicitly: "It is in Christ and through his blood that we have been redeemed and our sins forgiven, so immeasurably generous in God's favour to us"[5]. This proclamation is fundamental to all our moral doctrine, to our social teaching, to our pastoral concern for the poor. It is the basis of our pastoral ministry to the needy, the suffering and those in prison. It is fundamental to everything we do, to our whole episcopal ministry.

Dear brothers: Praised be Jesus Christ who has called us to proclaim his salvation and who sustains us by his love. May he keep us strong in joy, persevering in prayer together with his Mother Mary, and united to the end.

Praised be Jesus Christ.

[1] *Rom.* 1, 16.

[2] *Pauli VI Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 38.

[3] *Col* 1, 14.

[4] *Cfr. Eph.* 4, 1.

[5] *Ibid.* 1, 7-8.

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