



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO THE BISHOPS OF KENYA
ON THEIR «AD LIMINA» VISIT**

Monday, 6 December 1982

Dear Brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ

1. During this past days I have been able to speak personally with all of you about the Church of God in Kenya. We have discussed *your hopes and goals*, the renewal that the Holy Spirit has brought about in your local communities, as well as the obstacles and difficulties that you experience in your pastoral ministry as shepherds of the flock.

2. These days of your *ad Limina* visit evoke *my visit to your country*, when we were able to consider together many aspects of pastoral responsibility and episcopal leadership. A number of individual issues of importance come to mind at this time. I am deeply pleased to note your apostolic zeal and to encourage you in your collegial efforts in so many different fields, for example: your work for vocations to the priesthood and to religious life; the promotion of the apostolate of the family; initiatives aimed at the effective inculturation of the Gospel message in the lives of the faithful; continued efforts to foster integral human development through education, health and social services; the establishment of Christian communities bearing witness to peace, unity and fraternal love; solicitude for the enormous problem of the refugees; a generous sharing of resources; and united action in addressing various problem. For your zealous commitment to the Kingdom of God, and for that of your priests and religious, both autochthonous and missionary, I thank you in the name of Christ the Lord.

3. At this time there is a particular matter that I would like to propose to your special consideration. It is the great salvific truth of our *Redemption in Jesus Christ* - a truth that I endeavoured to proclaim among your people. In my first Encyclical I drew attention to this divine mystery, stating: "The Church's fundamental function in every age and particularly in ours is . . . to help all men to

be familiar with the profundity of the Redemption taking place in Christ Jesus” (Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Redemptor Hominis*, 10).

4. Precisely for this reason I have already asked for the celebration of *a special Jubilee* in 1983 to commemorate the anniversary of Redemption. On this occasion our thoughts will turn to Jesus, the Redeemer of man, who himself tells us: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me . . . to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” (*Luc. 4, 18-19*).

The year of salvation that we shall celebrate - the Redemption in Jesus Christ that we shall proclaim anew - offers *a real pastoral programme* for your local Churches, with a concentrated vision on the person of the Redeemer and on his salvific action in the history of your ecclesial communities. Indeed, the whole Church has a splendid opportunity to celebrate the purifying and sanctifying power of Christ’s blood, offered in sacrifice and shed for the forgiveness of sins. For the glory of God the Father we must proclaim over and over again to our people: “The blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin” (*1 Io. 1, 7*).

The Jubilee Year of Redemption is meant to be a proclamation in faith of the efficacy of Christ’s Paschal Mystery; it is a hymn of praise to the crucified and risen Lord. In proclaiming the Redemption to our people we must recall the Church’s need to respond to the Redeemer’s love. For this reason the Jubilee Year becomes a personal call to inner conversion; it is a special time for reconciliation, which is effected through the infinite merits of Jesus Christ. In the context of living faith the Jubilee Year is *an invitation to hope*, because it is *an announcement of salvation and a proclamation of mercy*.

As pastors of God’s people we know the profound need in today’s world for mercy. As I mentioned in “Dives in Misericordia”: “The Church must consider it one of her principal duties - at every stage of history and especially in our modern age - to proclaim and to introduce into life the mystery of mercy, supremely revealed in Jesus Christ” (Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Dives in Misericordia*, 14).

In the great event of Redemption, Christ offers to his Church the fullness of mercy, together with loving forgiveness.

5. The free offer of mercy and forgiveness in a year dedicated to the mystery of Redemption must lead us all to a renewed *emphasis on the Sacrament of Penance and on individual Confession*. It is in the act of individual Confession that each person is called to encounter Christ the Redeemer in the key moment of conversion. By God’s grace that moment of conversion is one of mercy and forgiveness and total reconciliation with God and his Church.

6. And because the Sacrament of Penance is the Sacrament of conversion, its use is intimately linked to the fullness of the Gospel message that is proclaimed in *the Eucharist*. “The Christ who

calls to the Eucharistic banquet is always the same Christ who exhorts us to penance and repeats his 'repent'. Without this constant ever renewed endeavour for conversion, partaking of the Eucharist would lack its full redeeming effectiveness . . ." (Eiusdem *Redemptor Hominis*, 20).

Venerable and dear brother Bishops, besides the great importance that Redemption in Jesus Christ holds out for the whole Church, there is *a particular relevance for the Church in Kenya*. The Jubilee Year of reconciliation and penance - of deep inner conversion can also be a supremely apt preparation for the International Eucharistic Congress to be held in Nairobi in 1985. Just as the Eucharist, as the summit of the Gospel proclamation, presupposes conversion, so all conversion must lead God's people to the Eucharistic enactment of Redemption. Hence, the proclamation of Redemption in Jesus Christ is both a pastoral programme and a hymn of praise to "the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God" (*Hebr.* 9, 14).

Dear Brothers, under the sign of Christ the Redeemer and in the power of his blood, go forward, in the unity of the universal Church, to lead your flocks "in right paths for his name's sake" (*Ps.* 23, 3).

To all the beloved faithful of Kenya I send my prayerful greeting and my Apostolic Blessing.

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