



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO KOREA, PAPUA NEW GUINEA,

SOLOMON ISLANDS AND THAILAND WELCOME CEREMONY ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II
AT THE ARRIVAL IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS "Lawson Tama" - Honiara (Solomon Islands)

Wednesday, 9 May 1984

Your Excellency the Governor-General,
Beloved People of Honiara and all Solomon Islands,

1. I am grateful for this most cordial welcome to your country. I consider it *a gift of God*, a great privilege, to be here with you this day, and I thank you for this warm reception.

From the beginning of my Pontificate, I have had *a special interest in Solomon Islands*. Only a month after I was elected Bishop of Rome and Successor of Saint Peter, I had the joy of establishing the first Ecclesiastical Province of the Catholic Church in this land, with Honiara being designated as the Metropolitan See and the Diocese of Gizo as its suffragan See. Then, less than a year and a half ago, I had the further pleasure of establishing the new Diocese of Auki, making it too a suffragan See of the Archdiocese of Honiara. These historic moments are signs of the vigorous life and growing maturity of the Christian faith in your country. And it is because of this vitality of your faith that I have greatly looked forward to being in your midst.

2. In the tradition of the Bishops of Rome, I come among you as "the Servant of the Servants of God", on *a pastoral visit* to the Catholic faithful of this young nation. It is my desire to strengthen my brothers and sisters in the faith, to urge them to stand firm in the message of the Gospel which they have received through the generous efforts of the missionaries. I look forward to celebrating the Eucharist with them today, so that together we can *express our unity in Jesus Christ* the Son of God and Saviour of the world, and in his name give glory and praise to the Most Holy Trinity.

3. I also wish to take this occasion to greet in *the love of friendship* all the beloved people of this land, and in particular my Christian brothers and sisters of other ecclesial communities, especially the Anglican Communion. I have heard that nearly everyone here is happy to be Christian, and I am pleased to learn of the many *ecumenical efforts* which are taking place. Such fraternal

collaboration is indeed praiseworthy and gives concrete expression to our common desire to see the prayer of Christ fulfilled: "That they may all be one" (*Io.* 17, 21).

4. As God gives me this opportunity of setting foot on the soil of a country of *many different languages and customs*, I express my admiration for the harmony and good will which you have been able to achieve in this one nation. May you always live in unity and peace, and may the spirit of brotherhood grow and develop among you.

I am *grateful to* God for this day which lies before us, the day of my pastoral visit to Solomon Islands. Today our hearts overflow with the words of the Psalm: "This is the day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it" (*Ps.* 118, 24).

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