



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO ZIMBABWE, BOTSWANA, LESOTHO,
SWAZILAND AND MOZAMBIQUE

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE ZIMBABWEAN YOUNG PEOPLE**

*Glamis Stadium, Harare
Sunday, 11 September 1988*

Dear Young Friends,

1. Thank you for the warm welcome you have given me! I hold each one of you and all Zimbabwean young people in my heart. Bishop Reckter's presentation and the sincere and thoughtful words of your representative show that you are conscious of the grace that is ours – here, today, in the Harare Showground: *we are together in Christ!*

Are the young people of Zimbabwe as happy to meet the Pope as the Pope is to meet you?

Yes, I am sure that you are happy, because Christ has brought us together in his name. We share the same Baptism into the Death and Resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We are God's adopted children, brothers and sisters in the one family, members of the Church, the body of Christ.

In the Church you are never alone. You have been present in the prayers of so many brothers and sisters all over the world – and you have been in my prayers – both during the difficult years before independence and now that you face the challenges of the future.

The *symbolism of your traditional dance* has vividly expressed the sentiments that fill our hearts at this moment. Thank you for the beautiful way in which you have expressed our *friendship*.

2. There are many things the Pope would like to say to you, the young people of Zimbabwe. First

of all, I want to remind you that you are Christ's friends. You are his brothers and sisters (Cfr. *Matth.* 12, 50). Saint John tells us that our love for Christ originates in his love for us. He writes: "We are to love... because *he loved us first*" (*1Jo.* 4, 19).

Christ loved us first. He loves us as a brother and as a friend. The Gospels describe Jesus as a friend of many people whose lives he touched. To the Apostles he said: "You are my friends... I call you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have learnt from my Father" (*Jo.* 15, 14-15). At the tomb of his friend Lazarus "Jesus wept; and the Jews said, 'See how much he loved him!'" (*Ibid.* 11, 36). The Gospels tell how the children flocked to him (Cfr. *Marc.* 10, 14); and even sinners and outcasts were considered his friends (Cfr. *Luc.* 15, 3; *Matth.* 9, 10-11). Saint Mark says about a young man who asked about the way to eternal life, that is, to salvation, that "Jesus looked steadily at him and loved him" (*Marc.* 10, 21). Unfortunately, the young man did not accept Jesus' invitation to follow him. He could not bring himself to accept the conditions of Jesus' friendship.

For to be Jesus' friend and brother is above all *to know him and to do what he has commanded* (Cfr. *Jo.* 15, 14).

3. Some of you may say that it would have been easy to know Jesus when he travelled around the towns and villages of Galilee and Judea, preaching and doing good. You may say that it is hard to think of yourself as a brother of someone who lived so long ago.

But no, *Jesus Christ is alive today and always!* This is our faith. This is the source of everything it means to be a Christian.

Jesus not only died for us – he rose from the dead, and there at God's right hand he pleads for us (Cfr. *Rom.* 8, 34). Ever since the day of Pentecost *the Risen Jesus has been present in his Church*, above all in the sacraments, and especially the Eucharist. *He has become one with every human being*, so that when we serve our brothers and sisters for love of him, we truly love and serve Jesus himself. That is what he means when he tells us that whatever we do for the least of our brothers and sisters, we do to him (Cfr. *Matth.* 25, 40; *Marc.* 9, 41).

This is how you young people of Zimbabwe can prove your love for Christ. You must help other people. You must serve them. And you can help and serve your brothers and sisters in Christ by building up a world in which the dignity of everybody will be acknowledged, defended and respected, where there will be no discrimination based on race or colour or national origin!

Remember, when God looks at you, he does not see a black face, or a white face, or a brown face; he sees the face of his Son, Christ. And when Christ looks at you, *he looks "at your heart"* (Cfr. *Apoc.* 2, 23; *Jo.* 2, 25). *And he teaches each one of you – and all of us – to do the same!*

When the Lord asks you, in the depths of your consciences, “Where is your brother?”, *you cannot, you must not answer* like Cain who murdered his brother Abel. Cain asked the Lord in reply, “Am I my brother’s guardian?” (*Gen. 4, 9*). The answer is “yes”. Yes, *you are always the guardians and defenders of your brothers and sisters!* You are their servants and their friends.

4. But it is not enough to act individually and alone. Many of you already belong to Catholic Youth Associations, Catholic Guilds and other groups where you pray together and do charitable and social work. Through these shared activities you can experience the meaning of those words of Jesus: “where two or three meet in my name, I shall be there with them” (*Matth. 18, 20*). You can discover the joy of being *partners whit each other and partners with Christ in the cause of his kingdom*.

Are you, the young people of Zimbabwe, ready to build up a strong and lasting brotherhood with Jesus?

Are you ready to be his partners and disciples?

Are you ready to give up passing interests and attractions in order to join him in the cause of his kingdom – that kingdom of justice and mercy, of reconciliation and peace?

Are you ready to work with your bishops and priests and with the religious sisters and brothers to build up the Church in your parishes and in your country, for the sake of spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ?

Your willingness to do this is what gives the Church and the Pope confidence in the future. You are the future of Zimbabwe! *You are the future of the Church! You are the future that the Pope prays for every day!*

5. Some of you will hear Jesus calling you, softly but insistently, to follow him *in the priesthood or in the religious life*. Listen to his voice deep in your hearts! Look around you! See his need of you in the faces of the children, the elderly, the sick and suffering people of your land! “The harvest is rich `but the labourers are few” (*Ibid. 9, 37*). When you feel the call to “something more”, and when the Sermon on the Mount – the Beatitudes – fills your heart with a new sense of purpose, do not silence that call! *Let it develop into the maturity of a vocation!* Respond to it in prayer and greater fidelity to Christ’s commandments! (cf. [*“Epistula Apostolica ad iuvenes, internationali vertente anno iuventuti dicato”, 8, die 31 mar. 1985: Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II, VIII, 1 \[1985\] 773 ss.*](#))

6. The second subject of my conversation with you and with the young people of Africa concerns your *family life*. Families are the basic units of society. If there is peace within families, there will be peace in society. Africa’s traditional cultural values are closely connected whit a tightly knit

family life, with special love for children and respect for the aged. You, as young Africans, must not let this human treasure disappear. Do not become enticed by a new way of life that does not bring with it genuine human progress, but only an appearance of progress, made up of a material development that benefits some but leaves many others abandoned along the way. *Only through the values of love and life can families become strong and stable* and so care for their members effectively. When a society does not protect these values, only unfavourable results can follow, not the true prosperity and peace that people long for.

7. At times young people do not appreciate the importance of family life. In fact you may take your family for granted. You do this if you refuse to help support your family, if you adopt attitudes and behaviour contrary to family life, or if you become involved in drugs, or follow the paths of violence or sexual irresponsibility.

As Christians, you are called to be builders of a healthy and moral family life. You must help to make your families truly “domestic churches”, where God is present in all the daily joys and concerns of the family members, where prayer and worship, mutual understanding and forgiveness, encouragement and love are the atmosphere you breathe. If you are builders of peace within your families now, your own future families will be communities of faith and holiness, of self-sacrifice and responsibility. *The truth of Jesus Christ should be the standard of your lives*, in theory and in practice. When other models and values are presented as “progress” or “liberation”, measure them against the “truth” of Christ, and his promise will become a reality in your lives. Jesus promises us: “If you make my word your home you will indeed be my disciples, you will learn the truth and the truth will make you free” (Jo. 8, 31-32).

8. Dear young friends, my third word of encouragement concerns your contribution as Catholics to the *development of your country*. I am speaking here about your responsibility to grow up into loyal and dedicated citizens of Zimbabwe. I am talking about your duty to make the best use of your education and training, so that you may lead useful and productive lives for the common good.

I should like you young people of Zimbabwe to be convinced followers of the “gospel of work” (Cfr. Ioannis Pauli PP. II “*Laborem Exercens*”, 6). The “gospel of work” means that our daily “toil”, whatever it may be, is good for us. It is also necessary for the society in which we live. It implies that our work is an important part of our lives, provided that it always expresses and increases our human dignity.

Work does this because it serves the community, permits a fuller sharing in the social and cultural life of one’s country and, above all, constitutes a magnificent way of collaborating with the Creator in “harvesting” the resources and values contained in creation itself (Cfr. *ibid.* 25).

And yet, I know that *many young Africans are unemployed*, and will find it very hard to obtain work in the future. This is the sad situation of so many young people all over the world! Without any fault

of your own, many of you are deprived of the means to further your personal development and to fulfil your hopes, namely, a job, a profession. What is needed is the support of other people. I know that your bishops are setting up programmes to provide training and other assistance, especially in rural areas. And I will continue to appeal for a new international economic order that will enable developing countries to expand their economic bases without accepting undue burdens or dependence on the more developed nations. But solutions to unemployment are best found in initiatives and collaboration at a local level. I encourage you to have confidence in yourselves. And know that the Pope is at your side with his support and his prayers as you look for concrete and imaginative ways of dealing with the problem.

Remember, my friends, that work has everything to do with union with God. Prayer and religious duties do not begin only when work and other commitments end. Remember the example of Jesus of Nazareth, “the carpenter’s son”(Matth. 13, 55) and a “carpenter” himself (Cfr. Marc. 6, 2). His work was also his way of doing the will of his heavenly Father (Cfr. Io. 10, 25). On this subject I am sure that your bishops and priests and teachers will have more to say to you in the light of the social doctrine of the Church.

9. Young people of Zimbabwe: the reading from Saint Paul’s Letter to the Romans which you have heard today is my parting word to you: “Bless your persecutors... Never repay injury with injury... See that your conduct is honourable in the eyes of all... *Do not be conquered by evil but conquer evil with good*” (Rom. 12, 14-21).

Our meeting is coming to an end. But be sure that I will carry you always in my heart. We are united in brotherhood with our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We will be united in prayer: Prayer that is open to the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth and love; prayer that knows how to approach Mary, our Mother in the Church, asking her to intercede with God for the needs of your country and of the world.

God bless you!

God bless all the young people of Zimbabwe!

Television message to the participants in “The Race Against Time”:

My dear Children,

Dear young Friends throughout the world,

Today many of you are taking part in “*The Race Against Time*”, a global programme to overcome hunger and disease and to help all children who are poor. In presenting this torch to me, you have invited me to be part of your worthy effort, and I am happy to do so.

As I have said many times before, young people are *the hope and promise of tomorrow*. Your joy and your enthusiasm bring us all a newness of spirit. Your search for what is good and true reminds us of what is most important in life and gives us confidence in the struggle against evil. Above all, your spontaneous desire to express your love makes us recall that it is love which renews the world, love which gives life its meaning and purpose. As Saint John says, "*as long as we love one another God will live in us and his love will be complete in us*" (1Jo. 4, 12).

Dear young friends, continue always to live in the love of God and to love one another from the heart. Then, "The Race against Time" shall be for our world not only a race against hunger and disease but also *a race for goodness and right, a race of love that gives us all new hope and joy*.

May God bless you with every good gift.

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