



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY
TO MADAGASCAR, LA RÉUNION,
ZAMBIA AND MALAWI

MEETING WITH THE CATHOLIC LAY LEADERS OF ZAMBIA

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

*Mulungushi Congress Hall, Lusaka
Wednesday, 3 May 1989*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. I greet all of you today with affection in our Lord Jesus Christ: *Moni Nonse!*

I am very happy to have this opportunity to meet with you, the Catholic lay leaders of Zambia: *men and women who give "a willing, noble and enthusiastic response to the voice of Christ... who invites all to join in his mission as Saviour" (Apostolicam Actuositatem, 33).*

The history of the Church in Zambia is not a long one compared to that of ancient Christian lands, but it is *a history rich in God's grace*. We see the fruits of that grace first of all in the work of missionaries, whose *love for every person* for Christ's sake led them to preach the Gospel to your grandparents and parents. We see it too in the rich harvest of faith among you, the laity of Zambia, in the years since the missionaries first arrived.

By visiting your country and meeting you today I wish to show *my love and esteem for each of you* and for all the people of this land. I also wish to *confirm you in your Catholic faith*, and to encourage you with the words of Christ that we have just heard in the Gospel: "You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world... *your light must shine in the sight of men*, so that, seeing your good works, they may give the praise to your Father in heaven" (*Matth. 5, 13-16*).

2. The images of “salt” and “light” have particular significance for the *laity, who are actively engaged in the world*. These images should remind you that involvement and participation in the day-to-day activities of life *must reflect the call you have received from God*. As we read in the First Letter of Saint Peter: “You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who *called you out of darkness into his marvellous light*” (1Petr. 2, 9).

The source of the Christian calling to which Saint Peter refers is to be found in the Sacrament of *Baptism*. Through water and the Holy Spirit you have been washed clean of sin and enabled to live a new life, the life of grace. As I stated in the Apostolic Exhortation “*Christifideles Laici*”. “It is no exaggeration to say that the entire existence of the lay faithful has as its purpose to lead a person to a knowledge of *the radical newness of the Christian life* that comes from Baptism, the sacrament of faith, so that this knowledge can help that person *live the responsibilities* which arise from that vocation received from God” (Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Christifideles Laici*, 10). In Baptism, you received a calling and were anointed, as Christ was, in the service of God’s plan of salvation. This anointing is intensified in the Sacrament of *Confirmation* and is sustained by your participation in the Holy *Eucharist*.

The Second Vatican Council speaks of the lay vocation which you received at Baptism as a share in *Christ’s own threefold mission as Priest, Prophet and King*. As worshippers whose every deed is to be holy, *you are a priestly people* consecrating the world to God. As courageous witnesses to the faith and to the Gospel message amid the contradictions of the world, you are a *prophetic people*. As members of Christ and part of God’s reign, you are a *kingly people* seeking to transform the world from within (Cfr. *Lumen Gentium*, 34-36). This, dear brothers and sisters, is the great dignity and responsibility which comes to you through Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist.

3. I know that you as lay leaders in Zambia are seeking to deepen your understanding of the calling you have received. I know that you wish to put the life of grace into practice, so as to become “salt” and “light” for the world. Because of this, I am pleased to see the many *associations, movements and groups* represented here today, as well as the individual *catechists and lay leaders*, whose work is so important for the vitality of the lay faithful in Zambia.

I also see represented the many *parishes and rural outstations* which are essential for providing sacramental ministry and Christian formation to the Catholic people. There are the *Small Christian Communities* whose members come together to hear God’s word and apply it to daily life in an atmosphere of Christian hospitality and personal sharing. Experience confirms that small communities of this kind benefit the entire People of God when they are firmly attached to the Gospel, to their pastors, to the universal Church and to all their brothers and sisters in the local diocese, and when they have a *true missionary spirit* (Cfr. Pauli VI *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 58).

Whatever organization or apostolate you have embraced as lay leaders, I would encourage you to continue your dedicated efforts to *strengthen all the baptized* in their priestly, prophetic and kingly mission in Zambia. Your efforts will be all the more effective to the degree that you *work together in loyal cooperation with your bishops and with one another*.

Without the personal commitment and dedication of people like yourselves, a full participation of the laity in the Church's mission would not be possible. For this reason, I wish to thank you in the name of the whole Church for all the *good things that you and your pastors are doing here* in order to build up the Body of Christ and to proclaim God's Kingdom in fidelity to your baptismal calling.

I also wish to commend the *bishops, priests, and men and women religious* who have devoted themselves so wholeheartedly to your formation. I join you in thanking them for the training and encouragement they have given to you, so that you can share fully in the Church's life and mission. I am confident of their commitment to help all the lay faithful of Zambia *to grow in the spiritual life*, in love for the Scriptures and Christian doctrine, as well as in the human virtues required of those who seek to bring God's word to others. Formation of this kind is of the utmost importance for the future of evangelization in your country.

4. The lay vocation is a calling from God to serve the Church from within the world. Yours is therefore a distinct vocation. The world offers you *the means to fulfil your Christian calling* because all of creation is destined to glorify God the Father in Christ. As sharers in Christ's priestly, prophetic and kingly mission, you prepare the coming of God's Kingdom *"by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God"* (Cfr. Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Christifideles Laici*, 15 adn. 40).

For this reason, dear brothers and sisters, you *bear witness to the calling you received in Baptism and Confirmation* when, inspired by the Gospel, you work for a more just society, for peace, for the dignity and rights of every human person, for a solution to social problems and for the defence of life. You do not do this alone, but within the community of the Church and *in ecumenical cooperation with other Christians*, and as far as possible with non-Christians and all people of good will.

There are two groups in particular who need to *hear the Good News of Christ* in Zambia today: families and youth. Social change is having a profound effect on family life in your country, and I understand that the number of broken families, unmarried mothers and one-parent families in Zambia today is increasing. You can truly be "salt" and "light" in these situations, first of all by your own *good example as Christian married people and parents*, and secondly by your sharing in the Church's family life catechesis. The whole community needs to support efforts to prepare young couples for marriage and to help them in their life together.

Through you, the Good News of Christ must also reach the young people of your country. *Youthful*

ideals are sometimes sorely tested by personal setbacks and problems, especially as a result of unemployment. Formal education does not always prepare young people for life in the villages where most of them will settle. Some are disenchanted with society, and rebel against their parents and even their Christian faith. I urge you, the lay leaders in Zambia, to *seek out these young men and women and help them* to find their place in society and in the Church. Sometimes you alone can reach them or be close to them. With your help, young people will be able to *hear the Good News* as it applies to every aspect of their lives.

5. We have stressed the importance and distinctiveness of your Christian vocation as lay men and women, but we must also acknowledge that the *lay vocation can never exist in isolation from the vocation to the ministerial priesthood*. Although there is an increasing number of vocations to the priesthood and the religious life in Zambia, there are still *too few priests* to meet all the needs of God's people.

In union with the bishop, the ordained priest is *the pastor who gathers Christ's flock into one* and cares for it through the ministry of Word and Sacrament. In this way God's people are healed, strengthened and nourished. As the Second Vatican Council reminds us: although differing in essence and not only in degree, the ministerial priesthood and the priesthood of all the faithful are *interrelated*: each in its own way shares in the one priesthood of Christ (Cfr. *Lumen Gentium*, 10).

I urge you to go on working and praying so that many more of your children *will hear and heed God's call* to the priesthood or religious life. In order to flourish, these special vocations also need to be supported by a *strong family life*. It is the good example and encouragement you give to your children which will bring an increase of labourers for the Lord's harvest.

6. There is one last thought I wish to leave with you, and it is crucial to the success of your mission as lay members of the Church. I know that you wish to be "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world". I know that you desire that your apostolate as lay people be fruitful. But this can happen only through a *living union with Jesus Christ*. As members of his Body, you must find the source of your life and the goal of all your activity in him. It is Christ whom you serve, Christ whom you proclaim, Christ whom you are called to bring to all people. Dear brothers and sisters: may you grow in holiness through the power of Christ's Spirit at work within you. Apart from Christ you can do nothing (Cfr. *Jo.* 15, 5). With him, God's power "is able to do far more than all that we ask or think" (*Eph.* 3, 20).

To you and your families, and to all the laity who work for the spread of the Gospel in Zambia, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing.

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