



# The Holy See

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APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO TANZANIA, BURUNDI,  
RWANDA, AND THE IVORY COAST

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II  
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE OF TANZANIA**

*Chapel of the Apostolic Nunciature, Dar-es-Salaam  
Sunday, 2 September 1990*

*Dear Brother Bishops of Tanzania,*

1. I wish to begin by thanking Bishop Lebulu for his kind words of welcome and for the sentiments of ecclesial communion which he has expressed on your behalf. As in all of my Pastoral Visits, I give special importance to my encounter with you, the Bishops. Our meeting this morning gives me great joy and comfort as I praise God for your generous dedication to the special calling that is yours in the Church. As Bishops of the local Churches of Tanzania you "have been *designated by the Holy Spirit to take the place of the Apostles as pastors of souls*" and, "together with the Supreme Pontiff and subject to his authority", you have "been commissioned to perpetuate the work of Christ, the eternal pastor" (*Christus Dominus*, 2).

My visit fulfils a longstanding desire to witness at first hand the life of your Dioceses. It is an opportunity for me to join the Catholic people of Tanzania in giving thanks to God for the seed of the Gospel which was implanted here over a century ago. Although your local Churches are young, they already show a *maturity and fruitfulness* that speak highly of your fidelity to the Lord. After the long planting of missionary labour, we are witnessing the beginnings of a harvest rich in promise among a people whose Christian life manifests the *freshness, confidence and enthusiasm of youth*.

I am happy to have this opportunity to reflect with you on some aspects of your ministry. Taking encouragement from all that has been done so far, my thoughts turn to the present and future of

the Church in your country and on the African Continent. Every day, in fact, the Church "*is moved by the Holy Spirit* to do her part for the full realization of the plan of God, who has constituted Christ as the source of salvation for the whole world" (*Lumen Gentium*, 17). To proclaim Jesus Christ as the Redeemer of the human family and, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to bring about the establishment of His kingdom of grace in human hearts, is the great mission which God has entrusted to the Church and which is now incumbent on you to promote with all your love and energies. The Church in the younger nations of Africa is entering a new stage in which your objectives must be *the strengthening of the faith, the conversion and in-depth transformation of individuals and of social life*, so that the truths and values of the Gospel will be more fully lived. This is the immense challenge of evangelization, both within the ecclesial community and in sectors where the Gospel is still unknown (Cfr. Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Allocutio in templo cathedrali Kinsasae*, 3, 2 maii 1980: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, III, 1 [1980] 1065).

2. Dear Brothers, *strengthening* the faith of your people and exhorting them to persevere in its demands are primary tasks of your ministry. As Pastors "designated by the Holy Spirit" (*Christus Dominus*, 2), you are called to exercise *positive leadership as well as vigilance* in promoting faith and holiness of life among the People of God entrusted to your care. If faith and morals are eroded by new patterns of living in a changing society, it is your fearless and serene *proclamation of the Gospel, in all its integrity*, that constitutes a bulwark of truth to sustain your people. If liturgical change or theological speculation create confusion among them, it is your sound judgment rooted in "*thinking with the Church*" that guides them along the path of sound doctrine and discipline. If there is a temptation to slacken evangelical fervour, it is your zeal that reawakens and expands their *missionary spirit*. Never lose confidence that the Lord who called you to shepherd his people will also provide the wisdom and strength you need to discharge this grave responsibility.

When we consider some of the challenges to be examined by the Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops – namely, the *proclamation of the Good News, inculturation, dialogue, justice and peace, and the means of social communication* – it is readily apparent that a topic arises which requires concerted action on the part of the whole Church in Africa. This topic, which underlies all the challenges to be discussed by the Synod, is *Christian formation*, by which clergy, religious and laity are prepared and motivated *to live, in an authentic and consistent manner, the state of life to which God has called them*.

3. The *formation of priests* is a pressing concern for the whole Church. For that reason it has been chosen as the theme of the next Ordinary Session of the Synod of Bishops, not only as it applies to *seminarians* but also to *priests after ordination*. A clear concern has also been voiced throughout the world and in many quarters of Africa that there be a more careful screening of those who present themselves as candidates for the priesthood, and that programmes of formation in seminaries be of a sufficiently high level.

Surely the adequacy of the seminarian's preparation and his *overall suitability for ordination* must

not be neglected for the sake of increasing the numbers of priests, even when the Church's needs are great. If the many dedicated priests of your dioceses are to enjoy the respect and esteem of the faithful, and if vocations among worthy young men are to increase as they must in light of present and future needs, it is imperative that ordination be conferred only on those who meet the requirements succinctly but clearly enunciated in the Code of Canon Law; namely, on those "who have an integral faith, are motivated by a right intention, possess the required knowledge, and enjoy a good reputation, good morals and proven virtues, and other physical and psychological qualities which are appropriate" (*Codex Iuris Canonici*, can. 1029).

All of these qualities need to be *verified and developed in the seminary* under the guidance of qualified superiors, spiritual directors and professors, and in accordance with a well-defined *programme of formation*. I know that you share this concern for the education of your clergy, as do the many fine priests who are engaged in seminary work at the Major Seminaries in Kipalapala, Segerea, Peramiho, Ntungamo and Kibosho, as well as at the many Junior Seminaries spread throughout Tanzania. I pray that God will bless your efforts to increase the number of qualified staff and to help them in their work, which is of the utmost importance for the future of the ecclesial community and of evangelization.

As I have mentioned, the Church's concern for the formation of priests also extends to the years after ordination. As Bishops you are charged with taking a *direct interest in your priests' life and ministry*. *Study courses, workshops, and spiritual exercises* are extremely important for your priests, but these must go hand in hand with your own willingness to meet with them on a regular basis, to listen to them, to encourage them, to help them overcome problems and difficulties, and to find ways to make use of each one's talents for the good of the entire diocese. They look to you for the leadership that consists above all in your *example of authentic priestly life and of apostolic zeal for evangelization*, including "first evangelization", which more and more becomes the responsibility of the local clergy. In all these ways, each of you has a very personal role to play in the lifelong formation and well-being of your priests. Furthermore, it is only right that your fraternal concern for them be particularly evident in the kind and compassionate way you deal with the special needs of elderly priests and those who are sick. May the Good Shepherd himself guide you in the fullness of evangelical love!

4. *Men and women religious* also occupy a special place in the pastoral mission of a bishop. The striking increase in the number of women religious, in particular, is a great gift to the Church in Tanzania and holds much promise for the future of consecrated life in your country. Although Religious will look chiefly to their own Institutes for formation, your interest in their welfare and your *support for their intellectual and spiritual enrichment* can be crucial, especially for Institutes of diocesan right.

Consecrated life exists *in* the Church and *for* the Church. Its ecclesial nature requires that it be lived with a deep sense of union and cooperation with the Bishops, and in affective and effective

solidarity with the particular Church in which Religious live and carry out their apostolate. While respecting the charism and legitimate autonomy of each Religious Institute, it is your responsibility to foster their well-planned participation in pastoral activities, in the context of the ecclesiology of communion which governs the life of the Church.

5. Of equal importance for the vitality of the Church is the *formation of the laity* which consists, in a sense, *in the continuing evangelization of those who are already baptized*. The task of preparing the laity to assume an active role in the Church and in society is all the more urgent in the face of social and cultural change, as well as of proselytizing pressures from other faiths or religious groups.

You are well aware that for Tanzanian Catholics, especially the young, to persevere in their faith, share it with others, and *bring its moral and spiritual values to bear on society*, they need sound catechetical formation as well as the support that comes from membership in the parish groups and Catholic *associations* which are increasingly active in your country. A host of dedicated *catechists* is doing a splendid service to your particular Churches, especially in preserving and deepening the faith on a local level, but they too look to your leadership for opportunities to grow intellectually and spiritually.

It is true that "the first means of evangelization is the witness of *an authentically Christian life*, given over to God in a communion that nothing should destroy, and at the same time given to one's neighbour with limitless zeal" (Pauli VI *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 41). The goal of formation for all the faithful – priests, religious and laity – is a living faith that *permeates every aspect of one's life and relationships with others*. National and diocesan programmes of pastoral action should aim at promoting a highly motivated faith built on a deep commitment to Christ and his Church, and on a knowledge of Catholic teaching in keeping with the educational level and the demands of each person's vocation.

The pursuit of this goal highlights the importance of ecclesial communion, that is, our *"unity in the work of service, building up the Body of Christ"* (Eph. 4, 12). Formation involves a mutual upbuilding on the part of all the members of the Church, beginning with the Bishops who, as the Church's pastors and teachers, have primary responsibility for faith and doctrine.

6. In bringing these reflections on Christian formation to a conclusion, my thoughts turn to Cardinal *John Henry Newman*, whose death a century ago is being commemorated throughout this year. The motto he chose as a Cardinal, *"cor ad cor loquitur"*, summarizes his philosophy of education, as well as his understanding of what we today call evangelization. For Cardinal Newman it was *individual influence, "heart speaking to heart"* that most effectively imparted the Gospel and that formed the whole person, heart and mind, and conscience. As he once wrote: *"Individuals who are seen and heard, who act and suffer, are the instruments of Providence in all great successes"* (*The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman*, Oxford, 1978-84, IV, 68 ss).

In that spirit, dear Brothers, I pray that God will sustain your zeal in the ministry and grant success to all your hopes and labours for the flowering of the Gospel. May he continue to raise up among you priests, religious and laity who are willing to be "seen and heard", to "act", and to "suffer" if need be, *so that Christ may be known and loved ever more in Tanzania and throughout Africa*. I express to you my fraternal appreciation and support. I thank you for your invitation to visit your particular Churches. May the close maternal protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary accompany all that you do. With these sentiments and with affection in the Lord, I cordially impart to each of you and to your dioceses my Apostolic Blessing.