



The Holy See

PASTORAL JOURNEY
TO BENIN, UGANDA AND KHARTOUM (SUDAN)

MEETING WITH THE LEADERS OF VARIOUS RELIGIONS

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

Apostolic Nunciature, Khartoum (Sudan)

Wednesday, 10 February 1993

Dear Friends,

I have looked forward to this meeting with you, *the leaders of the various religions professed by the people of the Sudan*. My Pastoral Visit to the Catholic Church in this Nation gives me the opportunity to extend the hand of friendship to you, and to express the hope that all the citizens of the Sudan, irrespective of differences between them, will live in harmony and in mutual cooperation for the common good.

Religion permeates all aspects of life in society, and citizens need to accept one another, with all their differences of language, customs, culture and belief, if civic harmony is to be maintained. Religious leaders play an important role in fostering that harmony.

Here in the Sudan I cannot fail to emphasize once more the Catholic Church's high regard for the *followers of Islam*. Sudanese Catholics recognize that their Muslim neighbours prize the moral life, and worship the One God, Almighty and Merciful—especially through prayer, almsgiving and fasting. They appreciate the fact that you revere Jesus and his Mother Mary (Cf. *Nostra Aetate*, 3). They acknowledge that there are very solid reasons for greater mutual understanding, and they are eager to work with you in order to restore peace and prosperity to the Nation. I hope that this meeting will contribute to a new era of constructive dialogue and goodwill.

I would also like to offer a special greeting to my *Christian brothers* from other Churches and Ecclesial Communities: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit" (Phil. 4: 23). As you are well aware, the Catholic Church is deeply committed to the search for ecumenical understanding, in the perspective of fulfilling the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, "that they may be one" (Jn. 17: 21). I am happy to know that here in the Sudan good ecumenical relations exist and that there are many instances of cooperation. I am confident that the Lord will bless your efforts to proceed further along that path.

To all of you, respected religious leaders of the Sudan, I express once more my esteem, and I repeat that the Catholic Church is irrevocably committed to ecumenical and interreligious dialogue. May God inspire thoughts of peace in the hearts of all believers.

Baraka Allah as-Sudan!
(God bless the Sudan!)