



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II TO THE BISHOPS OF ZAMBIA ON THEIR "AD LIMINA" VISIT

Monday, 31 May 1993 Dear Brother Bishops,¹ It is my great joy to welcome you, *the Bishops of Zambia*, in Rome for your visit *ad Limina Apostolorum*. I wish you a full share in the peace and joy bestowed by the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, upon the Church of Christ at Pentecost. I am grateful to Bishop de Jong for the devoted sentiments expressed on your behalf, and I extend a special welcome to Bishop Paul Lungu, who is making his first quinquennial visit. Your presence brings to mind my journey to Zambia in 1989. Among my fondest memories are those of the warmth and affection with which you and your people received the Successor of Peter, come among you to pray with you and to rejoice at the vitality of your faith. Indeed, in recalling those moments, I make my own the words of Saint Paul: "I give thanks to God always for you because of the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus". Please assure your priests, religious and lay faithful – especially the sick, and the children and young people – of my love and esteem for them. Your "*ad Limina*" visit is a providential opportunity to deepen the strong bonds of communion which unite the particular Churches in Zambia with the Bishop of Rome. I especially ask Almighty God that your profession of faith at the tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul will bring you fresh strength to carry out the tasks and responsibilities of your Episcopal ministry with faithfulness and pastoral charity.² The members of the particular Churches entrusted to your care are citizens of a nation which is going through profound changes. It is not difficult to understand the satisfaction which the Zambian people feel over the fact that *important political and social changes have taken place peacefully and with the cooperation of so many*. Clearly the zealous efforts of Pastors and faithful, working together with Christians of other Churches and Ecclesial Communities, played an important part in ensuring a positive outcome to this period of transition. Any common action of this sort, the Council teaches, "vividly expresses that bond which already unites" Christians and, insofar as all join in service to the common good, it "sets in clearer relief the features of Christ the Servant" (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 12). As the Fathers of the Council note, "Such cooperation... should be developed more and more" (Ibid.). In times of social and cultural change Bishops feel even more keenly their duty to help the baptized to live out their consecration and mission. They do so by reading the "signs of the times" in the light of the Gospel, with its inexhaustible power to illuminate the true destiny of man and the nature of temporal realities in relation to that destiny. You have striven with great zeal to discharge this responsibility, and I wish to commend you for one initiative among others, namely, the publication of your Pastoral Letter, "You Shall be My Witnesses".³ Recognition of what has been accomplished so far does not lessen your awareness that *a great deal remains to be done on the road to achieving the sound social order to which the people of Zambia aspire*. With this in mind your Letter entitled "The Future is Ours" calls for a new moral and political culture of responsibility. A widespread response to this summons to ethical renewal is essential to a healthy democratic order, in

which justice and solidarity become the pillars of a harmonious national life. I noted in the Encyclical Letter "[Centesimus Annus](#)" that to advance "the individual through education and formation in true ideals" is a fundamental requirement of authentic democracy (John Paul II, [Centesimus Annus](#), 40). Without a sound moral formation no citizenry would be capable of exercising well its political functions. Only if people are prudent, just, temperate and courageous, will the choices they make – whether in regard to the leaders they select or the policies they choose—be truly conducive to the well – being of the nation. Among the sound ethical habits needed today, great prominence is rightly given to solidarity, for this virtue is "*a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all*" (John Paul II, [Sollicitudo Rei Socialis](#), 38).⁴ It is not only the political changes in Zambia which present Catholics with challenges for the practical living out of their Baptismal calling. Changes in the economy and other elements of the social fabric, as you have indicated, can make Christian living difficult, especially Christian family life. Economic problems, coupled with the rapid and intense urbanization of your country, inevitably give rise to situations in which immoral responses to the resulting pressures exert a powerful attraction. That you should place such *a high priority on the pastoral care of families* shows sound pastoral judgment. I encourage you never to grow weary of exhorting and encouraging the faithful to strive always to model their lives after the pattern of Christian marriage and family life. In fact, as the Apostolic Exhortation "[Familiaris Consortio](#)" points out: "It will be (the Bishop's) particular care to make the diocese ever more truly a 'diocesan family', a model and source of hope for the many families that belong to it" (John Paul II, [Familiaris Consortio](#), 73). In this context it seems appropriate to mention two issues which are causing you particular concern. The first is the spread of the AIDS virus. Here all the disciples of Christ are obliged not to leave undone any possible act of goodness, so that those who are suffering may not be without the experience of Christian charity, which is the supreme criterion of action for Christ's followers. At the same time the Church insistently calls upon everyone to live according to the high standards of moral conduct which alone give expression to the true dignity of the human person. A second major social problem is that of securing *the just position of women in Zambian society*. Their invaluable contribution to the common good ought to receive due acknowledgment. Likewise, it is important that the full protection of the law be effectively extended to them in order to safeguard their rights, especially their rights to personal safety, economic justice, and access to education.⁵ With regard to these and other social problems, you must continue to find inspiration in the Church's social doctrine and to guide the faithful in living according to its tenets. Your efforts are not simply a response to the pressure of current events. They are born of a firm conviction about the intimate connection between the Church's mission to preach the Gospel and the support she gives to the advancement and true liberation of mankind: "Between evangelization and human development... there are in fact profound links" (Paul VI, [Evangelii Nuntiandi](#), 31). Concern for social development lies at the heart of the long tradition in Zambia of the Church's works of education, health care and other human services. Already well-respected for the contribution made through its schools, hospitals, clinics and other such centres, the Catholic community under your leadership is moving towards the day when the level of direct ecclesial involvement in education will be restored as it once was. Because of the high percentage of young people within the Zambian population, I know that you cannot but feel the seriousness of this increased responsibility, and that you will do all you can to ensure the best possible response on the part of the Catholic community. In regard to the religious formation of young people, I wish to pay tribute once again to the catechists of your Dioceses, who give God such honour and glory by their service of the Gospel. I am confident that with the publication of the "[Catechism of the Catholic Church](#)" you will have an especially apt instrument for directing the catechetical apostolate and for supporting all those devoted to this essential work.⁶ The continuing *increase in Zambia of the number of candidates to the priesthood and the religious life* calls for careful guidance and direction in the selection and training of those preparing for these vocations. You can be

sure that if your seminaries conform to the fundamental requirements of the Church's programme of priestly formation – especially as these are presented in the Conciliar Decree "Optatam Totius" and the Post-synodal Exhortation "Pastores Dabo Vobis" – they will bear excellent fruit for generations to come. Among the most important qualities to be cultivated in seminarians, the documents single out the loving acceptance of the celibate life, a spirit of poverty and simplicity, and an unflinching solicitude and zeal for the *salus animarum*, especially for the salvation of those who have strayed or become snared in sin. A Bishop's concern for priestly formation does not cease on the day he ordains his spiritual sons. "He is", as I wrote in "Pastores Dabo Vobis", "responsible for ongoing formation, the purpose of which is to ensure that all his priests are generously faithful to the gift and ministry received, that they are priests such as the People of God wishes to have and has a 'right' to" (John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 79). In seeing to it that your Dioceses have priests whose hearts are formed according to the very pattern of the heart of the Great High Priest, you are truly laying the foundations of the future welfare of the Church in your land.⁷ Likewise, while respecting the legitimate autonomy of Institutes of religious life and apostolic life, a Bishop has precise pastoral responsibilities for the care of those who belong to these communities. He should always be willing *to support young Zambians who aspire to consecrate their whole lives to the service of Christ's Kingdom* through the observance of the evangelical counsels. Of particular value is the support he offers Superiors in the delicate task of prudently discerning the fitness of candidates for admission to religious life. I join you too in expressing appreciation to the generous *missionary priests, Brothers, Sisters and lay men and women* whom the Spirit has moved to come to Zambia, bearing witness to that exchange of spiritual gifts between the particular Churches, which is an essential fruit of ecclesial communion.⁸ Dear Brother Bishops, my words to you are meant to be an *encouragement in the Lord*. Fully aware of the daily toils of your ministry, I commend you and all the people of your Dioceses to the loving care of Mary Queen of the Apostles. I constantly pray for the forthcoming Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops, for which you are preparing with dedicated zeal. Through that important initiative may the Church in Zambia and in all of Africa experience a new Pentecost, whereby the peoples of this continent will be filled with the Holy Spirit and will sing the praises of God in all the diversity of their tongues and cultures (Cf. Acts. 2: 4). In this hope, I gladly impart to you and all the faithful my Apostolic Blessing. © Copyright 1993 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana