



The Holy See

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

HOLY MASS IN THE "SOMHLOLO STADIUM" OF MBABANE

HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II

Mbabane (Swaziland)

Friday, 16 September 1988

*"Listen! You are to conceive and bear a Son,
and you must name him Jesus...
his reign will have no end" (Luc. 1, 31. 33).*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. Today we come together *in the name of Jesus Christ*, the eternal King, whose reign will have no end: "Justice shall march before him and peace shall follow his steps" (*Ps. 85 (84), 13*).

We present ourselves to him, *the King of Peace*. His kingdom of peace is also one of grace and truth, of justice and love. And *his Mother*, the Virgin of Nazareth, tells the angel at the Annunciation, "I am the handmaid of the Lord" (*Luc. 1, 38*). It is precisely *as the Lord's handmaid* that she participates in the kingship of her Son. That is why she is the Queen of Peace.

2. I know that here in Swaziland the Church has come to have a special veneration for Mary under the title "*Queen of Peace*". In my joy at being among you, I too wish to join in this veneration of Christ's Mother. In this spirit, and *uniting myself to the whole Church in Swaziland*, I offer *heartfelt greetings to you who are assembled here* for this memorable celebration and to *all the people of your beautiful country* during this year in which you celebrated the twentieth anniversary of national independence.

I greet most respectfully His Majesty King Mswati III and Her Majesty the Queen Mother. With them, I greet as well the distinguished members of your Government. I extend fraternal greetings in Christ to Bishop Ndlovu, to the priests and religious of Swaziland and to all the members of the catholic Church in your country, I also greet those present who belong to other Ecclesial Communities or to non-Christian religions. To all of you go my greetings in the love of God.

3. Today's first reading from Sacred Scripture helps us to understand better what we mean when we say that Christ is the King of Peace. Saint Paul tells us that "*God in Christ was reconciling the world to himself*" (2Cor. 5, 19). This reconciliation was accomplished through Christ's redeeming *Sacrifice on the Cross*, and it is the basis of the peace that fills Christ's kingdom. It is a reconciliation that cannot be destroyed. *It remains for ever fruitful* as a source of reconciliation and peace for the whole human race.

Christ's work of reconciliation transforms us from within. It *frees us from selfishness and sin*, and confers upon us a *new life* in him. As Saint Paul tells us, "God in Christ was reconciling the world to himself, *not holding men's faults against them*" (*Ibid.*); "... the reason (Christ) *died for all* was so that living men should live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised to life for them" (*Ibid.* 5, 15). "... *For anyone who is in Christ, there is a new creation*" (*Ibid.* 5, 17).

Christ is King of Peace because he establishes a new creation and restores *the dimension of brotherhood* to human life on earth. All people are brothers and sisters to each other because God is their common Father. Christ revealed this to us by teaching us to call God "*Our Father*". This is the foundation of the peace of God's Kingdom.

4. To be sure, God alone is the source of this peace. In him we find the source of all reconciliation, human and divine. Saint Paul proclaims this when he says that "It is all *God's work*" (2Cor. 5, 18). Yet we also know in faith that the gift of *peace is likewise a human responsibility* given to each and every one of us. Saint Paul again proclaims: "the love of Christ overwhelms us" (*Ibid.* 5, 14). God, who "in Christ was reconciling the world to himself... has entrusted to us the news that (people) are reconciled" (*Ibid.* 5, 18). And so, "we are *ambassadors for Christ; it is as though God were appealing through us*, and the appeal that we make in Christ's name is: be reconciled to God" (*Ibid.* 5, 20). Clearly, Saint Paul knows that he is handing on a "*message of reconciliation*". It *constitutes a mission* not only for his contemporaries, but for the Church throughout the ages.

5. After many centuries *this apostolic mission*, described in the Second Letter to the Corinthians and proclaimed during today's liturgy, *reached this land* in the southern region of the African continent. What does this mission mean for us who are gathered here, for *the Church in Swaziland* and for all the people of your country? How does the apostolic "message of reconciliation" resound here with new vigour?

An ambassador is known by his credentials. He must give credible proof that he has been sent. As

ambassadors of Christ we too must give *proof of our mission*. And the greatest proof is our own fidelity to the *Christian way of life*. If we are reconciled with God, with ourselves and with others, and if we in turn foster this reconciliation in society, we can make a convincing claim to be ambassadors of the King of Peace. In this way, the good news that God in Christ has reconciled the world to himself will be *credible* to those who see and hear us.

6. An important challenge today in our individual lives and in the life of society is the great need to support and strengthen *the family*, that “intimate community of life and love” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 48) which is the primary foundation of society. Today’s Gospel reminds us that Christ “who is our peace” (*Eph. 2, 14*) was himself a member of a family. He was the Son of Mary. Through Mary’s “yes” to God, through her loving surrender to God’s will, Jesus entered our world as a man and became a member of a human family, *the Holy Family of Nazareth*. And in so doing, he affirmed *the dignity and value of family life*.

Like the Holy Family of Nazareth, every family in Swaziland, every family in the world, is *built on love and exists for love*. As I stated in my *Apostolic Exhortation on the Role of the Family in the Modern World*, “the family has *the mission to guard, reveal and communicate love*, and this is a living reflection of, and a real sharing in, God’s love for humanity and the love of Christ the Lord for the Church his Bride” (Ioannis Pauli PP. II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 17).

In family life, *the love between husband and wife* is of primary importance. For if a family is to be true to its own nature as an intimate community of life and love, then husband and wife must form a loving communion of total and mutual self-giving. God our Creator has established natural complementarity and equal dignity between man and woman which facilitate and favour this communion. Furthermore, as a special source of grace, Christ instituted the *Sacrament of Matrimony* in which the Holy Spirit is poured forth on a couple to be their light and wisdom, to give them the strength to remain faithful for all of life to their marriage vows. Christian marriage, then, is characterized by *a special bond of unity and indissolubility*, for Christ gives to each couple the grace to overcome all obstacles to a lifelong and exclusive union in love.

For this reason, Christians find that a *monogamous marital union* provides the foundation upon which to build a stable family, in accordance with *the original plan of God for marriage*. “From the *beginning*”, God founded the marriage covenant on the *equal personal dignity* of men and women, “who in matrimony give themselves with a love that is total and therefore unique and exclusive” (Ioannis Pauli PP. II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 19). Hence, all forms of disregard for the *equal dignity of men and women* must be seen as serious contradictions of the truth that Christ, the King of Peace, has brought into the world.

At the same time, it is important to recognize the positive practices and values which strengthen and support marriage and family life. These include the worthy *traditional Swazi values and practices* that have come down to you. It has been a constant tradition of the Church to receive

from various cultures everything that helps to express better the unfathomable riches of Christ. Your culture can *enrich the whole Church* to the degree that it is filled with human wisdom and enlivened by moral values (*Ibid*, 10).

7. The love of Christ and the truth of his Gospel also urge you to help those in your communities whose marriages and family life are troubled because of marital infidelity and promiscuity, drug and alcohol abuse, and the unbridled use of modern technology in ways that do not always respect the dignity of human life. These and other *social evils* are by no means confined to Swaziland. They are symptoms of the *lack of reconciliation* with God and with others that we find in individual human hearts and in whole societies in today's world.

Despite these social ills and the suffering they cause, there is never any reason for us as Christians to be overwhelmed with discouragement; rather we should be *overwhelmed with joy at the fidelity of God*, at the Good News of *the Victory of the Cross*, at the wondrous love of our heavenly Father. In this context, for example, we recall those *grandmothers* who, when faced with broken homes and abandoned children, have lovingly reared their grandchildren and introduced them to Christian faith and sacramental life. May we *learn from these good women the power of love*, as they so generously care for the young who are the future of Swaziland.

8. Dear brothers and sisters: the search for reconciliation and peace that begins in your families must also extend to *your communities, your country and the whole human race*. Peace is *Christ's gift* to us (Cfr. *Jo.* 14, 27), but as sinners we must constantly *search for peace* and struggle to preserve it. My predecessor Paul VI called attention to an important aspect of this search when he said to us: "If you want peace, work for justice" (Pauli VI *Nuntius ob diem ad pacem fovendam dicatum pro a. D. 1972, die 8 dec. 1971: Insegnamenti di Paolo VI, IX [1971] 1073 ss*).

As Catholics, you have an important contribution to make to the building of *a more just society* for your fellow citizens. The traditional sense of justice that your ancestors have handed down to you can be *enriched by Christian revelation* to encompass a new and deeper commitment to authentic human development for all. In this regard, I want to commend you on the current efforts being made in Swaziland to ensure racial harmony, religious liberty, social welfare, and a hospitable welcome for refugees. There has also been a long-standing openness to the views of other nations. All this serves to promote *a more just and humane society* and a more peaceful world.

9. The apostolic mission to be ambassadors of reconciliation places a special obligation on all Christians to seek reconciliation *among themselves*. With all of you, *I welcome the initiatives* that have been undertaken by ecumenical organizations on a national level, as well as the more spontaneous collaboration of Christians locally. *A true spirit of ecumenism* will not ignore the real doctrinal differences that exist among Christians, nor should it lead to indifference about our Catholic identity or the practice of our faith. But we can and should rejoice at every effort to promote Christian unity, especially as we work together for greater justice and peace.

10. My brothers and sisters in Christ: the Angel Gabriel was sent by God to the Virgin Mary to announce to her the salvation of the world: “Listen! You are to *conceive and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus*. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High... and his reign will have no end” (*Luc. 1, 31-33*).

Yes, *the reign of Christ will have no end*, even though the powers of this world will pass away, even though *heaven and earth will pass away*. His word will not pass away: the word of Christ will endure for ever because it is the word of truth and love, the word of justice and grace, the word of reconciliation and peace.

What the Psalmist foretold is thus fulfilled: “Mercy and faithfulness have met; Justice and peace have embraced... The Lord will make us prosper and our earth shall yield its fruit. Justice shall march before him and peace shall follow his steps” (*Ps. 85(84), 10-13*).

The Angel Gabriel announced: “Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God’s favour. Listen! You are to conceive and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus” (*Luc. 1, 30-31*): *Jesus*, a name which means “God saves”, *a name which means “Saviour”*.

11. And she whom we venerate here in Swaziland as the Queen of Peace answered with the words: “*I am the handmaid of the Lord... let what you have said be done to me*” (*Ibid. 1, 38*).

The Queen of Peace is the one who wishes to serve – who wishes above all to serve the reconciliation and peace which Christ her Son brings to the world. She – the Mother of the King of Peace – desires above all *to serve and to intercede* so that “our earth shall yield its fruit”, the fruit of peace with God and among all people.

Mary – the Queen of Peace – desires above all to serve, because “*to serve God is to reign*”.
Amen.

Act of Entrustment to Mary

O Mary, Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, at the end of this celebration of the Holy Eucharist, in which we have meditated on the mystery of the Annunciation and honoured you under the title “Queen of Peace”, I now turn to you in confident prayer.

Look with love upon God’s people gathered here in worship. See how they rejoice with you in the Good News of your Son. You know how firmly they believe in the Gospel. You know how deep their love is for him. Be near to them always, O Mother of the Redeemer, to assist them on their

journey of faith. In union with the Body of Christ throughout the world, *the Church in Swaziland* seeks to respond generously to the great task of evangelization: to hand on faithfully the teachings of the Church, to defend the dignity and rights of every person, to give constant glory and praise to the Most Holy Trinity.

O dearest Mother of Our Saviour, I entrust to your loving care all the members of the Church in this land, their bishop and priests, their men and women religious, all the laity who serve Christ in the midst of the world. I entrust them to you with great hope, confident that you will teach them how to grow each day in the *knowledge and love of your divine Son*.

O Blessed Virgin Mary, in a special way I entrust to you *the youth* of this country: the little children in their innocence and joy, and the young men and women who are now deciding what to do with their lives. Lead them along the way of truth and love to a future that is bright with hope. May their minds and hearts, like your own, be guided by *the wisdom of the Holy Spirit*.

O Mary, Mother of tenderness, I entrust to you *the sick and the elderly*, and all who care for them. Your own heart was pierced with suffering and sadness as you witnessed *the redemptive suffering of your Son*. Help those who are given a generous share in the Cross of Christ to share as well in the promise of the Resurrection. May *the families of Swaziland* be united in Christ's love and may their homes be like your home in Nazareth, a place of warm welcome and affection.

O Mary, Queen of Peace, I entrust to your gentle care all *the beloved people dwelling in this land*. I place before you their aspirations and desires, especially their concern for justice and peace. When your Son was born at Bethlehem, the angels sang out in chorus: "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and *peace to men who enjoy his favour*" (*Luc. 2, 14*).

Yes, the Son of God, your Son, came to bring peace, peace to men and women of good will, peace to people of every race and nation, peace to those "who enjoy his favour", peace that is founded on justice and mercy. Intercede with your Son, O Queen of Peace, for the gift of peace throughout the world and for the fullness of peace in the hearts of all. And may the Kingdom of the Prince of Peace be ever more firmly established here in Swaziland. Amen.

I have come to Southern Africa as a pilgrim of peace carrying with me a message of reconciliation. I am saddened to learn that others on their way to join me in this pilgrimage have been the victims of a hijack that caused such anguish and bloodshed. I pray that God may take to himself those who have died and that he may console the members of their families, and grant a steady and speedy recovery to the wounded.

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