



# The Holy See

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APOSTOLIC PILGRIMAGE TO AFRICA  
(MAY 2-12, 1980)

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II  
TO THE PRESIDENT OF KENYA\***

*Nairobi*  
*Wednesday, 7 May 1980*

*Mr President,*

1. I wish to express my gratitude to you for your invitation to the State House. I am very pleased to have a meeting with Your Excellency and to be able to greet so many distinguished personages of your nation. The few hours I have already spent in Kenya have enabled me to experience for myself traditional African hospitality, which is a deeply human and warm reality.

In addressing you today, and through you the whole Nation of Kenya, I consider it fitting to pay tribute in the first place to the memory of the Founding Father of this Republic, the late President, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta, who completed his life of service to his people less than two years ago. In the eulogy which you delivered during the State funeral of the one you called "my father, my teacher and my leader", you summed up the meaning of his contribution in the following words: "In life, Mzee Kenyatta championed justice and equality. He advocated respect for human dignity and the preservation of our culture. His concern for the welfare of all Kenyans was deep and binding. We are all indebted to him...". During the early years of this nation, he achieved unity, created a spirit of brotherhood, and instilled the determination to go on building the nation through the common efforts of all. He left to Kenya *a beautiful heritage and a challenging programme*.

2. *Respect for human dignity*, for the dignity of every man, woman and child, for the dignity that all human beings possess not because it has been conferred on them by their fellowmen but because they have received it from God: this is *the fundamental attitude to be adopted if real progress is to*

*be made*. It is precisely in this conviction and in this commitment to the dignity of every human being that the Church and the State find themselves on the same path.

I know, Mr President, that on many occasions you have publicly expressed your appreciation of the contribution which the Catholic Church in your country makes to the advancement of the peoples. This, together with the existence of good relations between your nation and the Holy See, together also with the collaboration which exists in the field of education, health care and other areas of human development, is reason for much satisfaction. It also augurs well for the future.

3. On this occasion, I wish to repeat that *the Church is deeply concerned for all the needs of the people*. Precisely because she values so highly the dignity of every human being, the Church will always continue to exercise her mission, in accordance with her own nature, for the real good of man and society, and for the benefit of the whole human person.

In this spirit, the Church contributes to development, unity, brotherhood and peace among people and among nations. For this reason, the Church will raise her voice and call upon her sons and daughters every time that the conditions of life of individuals and communities are not truly human, every time they are not in` accord with human dignity. This too is a reason why I have undertaken my first journey through the African continent: to proclaim the dignity and basic equality of all human beings and their right to the full development of their personality in every sphere, material as well as spiritual.

Mr President, I should like this brief meeting with you and with all your distinguished guests to be for each and every one, for all the people of Kenya, a fraternal encouragement to advance along the people of Kenya, a fraternal May God, the Creator of man and nature, accompany you in your endeavours to lead Kenya forward, to build a prosperous Africa, and to construct a world community in unity, justice and peace.

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*\*Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II, vol. III, 1 p.1207-1209.*

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