



The Holy See

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

WELCOME CEREMONY

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II*

*International Airport of Harare, Zimbabwe
Saturday, 10 September 1988*

*Mr President,
My brother Bishops,
Brothers and Sisters in Christ,
Dear Friends,*

1. In kissing Zimbabwe's soil, I have wished *to honour the entire nation and show my gratitude to Almighty God* who enables me to visit our beloved country. I give thanks to him from the depths of my heart for ringing me once more to Africa: continent of hope and promise for the future of mankind.

It is fitting that my pastoral visit to five countries of Southern Africa should begin here, in *Zimbabwe, a nation making a new beginning*, where a new era of peace and reconciliation is taking shape – in the midst of not a few difficulties – a nation to which the whole of Africa, and indeed the world, looks for a sign that a better future can be built on the basis of justice and brotherhood under God, without discrimination.

2. Mr President, I wish to express to you my deep gratitude for the welcome to Zimbabwe which you have extended to me. When you visited the Vatican in May 1982 you asked me to come to your country, and recently you renewed that cordial invitation. I express my heartfelt appreciation to you, to the members of the Government and to the entire population who have so warmly

welcomed me as a friend.

Within Africa *Zimbabwe is the country which has most recently come to independence*. Your people vividly recall the midnight between 17 and 18 April 1980 when the national flag was raised and the new Republic was proclaimed, inaugurating what you yourself called a “time for reconciliation, reconstruction and nation-building”. These noble words still constitute the goal which inspires your efforts and those of your fellow-citizens. Such a programme offers an appropriate framework for the effective and practical collaboration of all sectors of society on the path of progress and peace. I assure you of my prayerful support and encouragement.

I also wish to greet you, Mr President, in your capacity as current Chairman of the *International Movement of Non-Aligned Nations*. Zimbabwe and the other members of this group affirm what I spoke of in my recent Encyclical, namely: “the right of every people to its own identity, independence and security, as well as the right to share, on a basis of equality and solidarity, in the goods intended for all” (Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 21). In this regard I would repeat something I said on a previous visit to this continent: “It is my conviction that all Africa, when allowed to take charge of its own affairs, without being subjected to interference and pressure from any outside powers or groups, will not only astound the rest of the world by its achievements, but will be able to share its wisdom, its sense of life, its reverence for God with other continents and nations, thus establishing that exchange and that partnership in the mutual respect that is needed for the true progress of all humanity” (Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Allocutio ad Exc.mum Virum Alhaji Shehu Shagari, Nigerae Praesidem in palatio vulgo 'State House' cognominato habita*, 3, die 12 febr. 1982: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, V, 1 (1982) 372 s).

3. Unfortunately, in the Southern African region these rights are far from being fully respected, these aspirations far from being fulfilled. Powerful political, economic and ideological forces endanger the still fragile stability of countries which are only beginning to consolidate their recently acquired independence. Those forces impede the self-determination of peoples; they foment ideological, ethnic and tribal conflicts; they delay the process of development.

Where instances of serious injustice have caused and continue to cause immense suffering, hope for a peaceful outcome and just solution must include genuine and sincere dialogue between opposing viewpoints. This is true for the grave issue of apartheid and for all violations of human rights. I appeal to all those who bear responsibility for the destiny of the peoples of this region, of whatever racial extraction or ideological inspiration, to *renounce the use of violence as a method for achieving their ends*. They have a duty before history to resolve their differences by peaceful means, in the only way consonant with man’s transcendent calling. The time for such steps is now!

4. *The main purpose of my present pilgrimage is to visit my brothers and sisters of the Catholic faith*. I am overjoyed to be among you and to rejoice with you in the faith and sacramental life that unites us in the Body of Christ. I look forward to celebrating this unity with you in the Eucharist. I

come to encourage you all, especially you, my brother bishops and priests, in the great task of evangelization and in your many services to the national community.

I also greet my brothers and sisters, *representatives and leaders of the other Ecclesial Communities in Zimbabwe*. I express to you my sincere affection in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

As a pilgrim of peace, seeking to follow the example of Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, I salute all the citizens of Zimbabwe: the men and women of every walk of life, the children, the young, the old; in a special way, the sick and the poor, and all who are burdened in body or in spirit. May God's love embrace every one of you.

God bless Zimbabwe! God bless Africa!

*AAS 81 (1989), p. 335-338.

Insegnamenti XI, 3 pp. 698-702.

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