



# The Holy See

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

### **MEETING OF JOHN PAUL II WITH PRIESTS, RELIGIOUS AND SICK**

*Cathedral of Manzini (Swaziland)  
Friday, 16 September 1988*

*Dear Bishop Ndlovu,  
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

1. It is a great joy for me to greet all of you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, *who laid down his life for us* on the Cross and rose for our salvation. In his name, we come together in this cathedral church in order to glorify God and to thank him for the *gifts of life and redemption* that we have received through his Son.

Our hearts rejoice at the “good news” that we heard a moment ago: *Happy are the poor in spirit, the gentle, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers. Happy are those who mourn, those who seek what is right, those who are persecuted*<sup>[1]</sup>.

We are filled with confidence and with hope because of these words spoken by God’s own Son. The Beatitudes proclaim God’s love of the *vulnerable of this world*, of those who are considered by some as *second-class* members of the human family or as being unable to lead a full life. The Beatitudes announce God’s love for those who hold fast to the Gospel in the face of every obstacle.

The Beatitudes, moreover, introduce the world to *a deeper wisdom based on faith*. They are inseparable from the Cross. When human efforts cannot undo the ravages of sin, we look to God in faith for an answer, and the answer is *the crucified Christ*. As Saint Paul tells us: “While the

Jews demand miracles and the Greeks look for wisdom, here are we preaching a crucified Christ; to the Jews an obstacle that they cannot get over, to the pagans madness, but to those who have been called, whether they are Jews or Greeks, a Christ who is the power and the wisdom of God”[2].

This message applies to every Christian, but I know that it has a special meaning for many of you in this cathedral today. Who among the *sick and handicapped* can say that their heart has not been transformed by their experience of the Cross? Who among the *clergy and religious* have not seen the power and the wisdom of a crucified Christ at work in the world? The path of suffering, the path of service, can be transformed by God’s grace into a self-giving that is *filled with redemptive love*. This is the way of the Beatitudes; it is God’s way revealed in Christ.

2. *Dear brothers and sisters who are sick or handicapped*: the world is inspired whenever you overcome your physical limitations instead of being overcome by them. But the People of God cherish you all the more, because they recognize in you *a tremendous source of spiritual power* in the heart of humanity. God assures us that his power is at its best working in the midst of human weakness[3]. You can unleash *a vast reservoir of love* for the benefit of all those who are in special need of God’s mercy and help. You build up the Body of Christ in the *Communion of Saints*, that mysterious bond in which heaven and earth and purgatory are united in one great desire that God be “all in all”[4].

You *share in a special way* in the redemptive work of Christ. He has conquered the evil of sin, of suffering and death by the love he showed on the Cross. By *lovingly joining your sufferings to his*, you help to transform the world *spiritually from within*. You create a wider opening in the heart of humanity for God’s redemptive love to enter in.

For this reason the Church *cherishes you and asks for your prayers*, as I do today: pray for more forgiveness and peace in the world. Pray for those who are searching for God and need his mercy. Pray for the Church.

I know that, like the rest of humanity, you experience moments of *sadness and discouragement*. You too must struggle to overcome temptation, to conform your lives to the Gospel, and above all to persevere in faith. But you must never allow yourselves to doubt God’s love or the truth of what he has promised. You are not forgotten. You can take comfort from the example of Saint Paul, who in the midst of his heroic missionary labours wrote: “Though this outer man of ours may be falling into decay, the inner man is renewed day by day”[5].

3. I also wish to offer a special word of greeting and encouragement to the *clergy and religious* of Swaziland present here today, as well as to the visiting clergy and religious from other countries. The Servites, who first planted the seeds of the Gospel in Swaziland with patience and love, have now been joined by other religious communities. Let us not forget today the pioneers of the

Kingdom of God in this the Kingdom of Swaziland, those who began the work, and those who have carried it on, including of course the first Bishops of Manzini and the first Swazi Bishop, Mandlenkosi Zwane. I am encouraged by the increasing number of *Swazi vocations* to both the diocesan priesthood and to the ranks of men and women religious.

For all of you we give thanks to God! You too can rejoice in the truth of the Beatitudes, which is always *at work in your lives and ministries*, as it has been throughout the entire history of missionary activity in Southern Africa.

Like Christ, who on “seeing the crowds” began to teach them the true path to happiness[6], you who are priests and religious also fulfil *a prophetic mission*. You invite people to put aside a worldly way of thinking and *to seek the Kingdom of God*. You invite them to put their faith in what is unseen. Those whom the Beatitudes call blessed already taste “the goodness of the Lord” in this life, but their total vindication is reserved for the kingdom to come.

That is why Saint Paul tells us that we walk “*by faith, not by sight*”[7]. And this applies to ourselves as well as to our people. As priests and religious we learn *patience and humility* from our labours. Like “the poor in spirit” we know that without God our efforts are in vain. By relying on his help, we can persevere in fulfilling the apostolic charge: “Proclaim the message and, welcome or unwelcome, insist on it. Refute falsehood, correct error, call to obedience – but do all with patience and with the intention of teaching”[8].

4. Our experience of faith teaches all of us – priests, religious and laity – how dependent we are on God. but the lesson does not end there. If faith gives us the firm conviction that “we are not forgotten”, it also teaches us that we in turn *must not forget others* especially the needy. We may be tempted to show respect only for the great ones of the earth, to reserve our love for those who are our own family and friends. But Christ teaches us that, for good or ill, what we do to *the least of our brothers and sisters*, we do to him[9].

Surely our love, like God’s, must encompass *the human person in every dimension*. Our concern is for the material and spiritual well-being of every member of the human family. The spiritually needy include those who have *not heard the Gospel* or who, after hearing it, have *fallen away* from the practice of their faith; those in need of catechesis or *moral encouragement and guidance*, especially young people and married couples. Christian love likewise embraces all those *in physical or material need*: the sick and disabled, the poor and unemployed, the homeless and hungry, the oppressed, the persecuted and the imprisoned.

There is also the *serious plight of refugees*. As I wrote in my recent Encyclical on social concerns, the refugee problem is a “*festering wound*” which deprives millions of people of “home, employment, family and homeland” and which “typifies and reveals the imbalances and conflicts of the modern world”[10]. I know that in Swaziland the Church, as well as the public authorities and

non-governmental and international organizations, has worked hard to meet the needs of refugees. The government and people of Swaziland are to be *commended for the hospitality and kindness* extended to these people, and for all that is being done to resettle them, despite limited resources and the problem of unemployment. This national policy is a *tribute to the memory* of your late and revered King Sobhuza II, who initiated it. and to your reigning monarch, King Mswati III, who has followed his father's example.

5. Dear brothers and sisters: we have reflected on the Beatitudes and their promise of future vindication for the poor and lowly. We have considered Christ's Cross and its power to bring healing and redemption to the world. It is only fitting that we have done so in this cathedral *named in honour of Mary's Assumption*, body and soul, into the glory of heaven.

As the Lord's lowly "handmaid"<sup>[11]</sup>, the Virgin of Nazareth was a *model of all the Beatitudes*. As the "Sorrowful Mother" she *shared in a unique way in the redemptive death* of her Son on the Cross.

Now, from her place in heaven, she testifies to *the fulfilment of all God's promises*: "All generations will call me blessed, for the Almighty has done great things for me"<sup>[12]</sup>.

As pilgrims who still walk "by faith, not by sight", let us turn to the Mother of God for *hope and comfort*. Let us unite our joys and sorrows to her own. She will teach us the meaning of the Beatitudes. She will *lead us into the mystery of redemption*: into the mystery of redemptive love.

[1] Cfr. *Matth.* 5, 1-12.

[2] *1 Cor.* 1, 22-24.

[3] Cfr. *2 Cor.* 12, 9.

[4] *1 Cor.* 15, 28.

[5] *2 Cor.* 4, 16.

[6] Cfr. *Matth.* 5, 1.

[7] *2 Cor.* 5, 7.

[8] *2 Tim.* 4, 2.

[9] Cfr. *Matth.* 5, 1.

[10] Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 24.

[11] Cfr. *Luc.* 1, 38.

[12] *Luc.* 1, 48-49.

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