



The Holy See

Apostolic Journey to Madagascar, La Réunion, Zambia and Malawi (April 28 - May 6, 1989) ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

TO THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS* Sunday, 30 April 1989 Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, 1. During the course of the pastoral visit which I am making to this country before going to Reunion, Zambia and Malawi, I am happy to have this opportunity to greet the diplomatic corps accredited to the Democratic Republic of Madagascar. Indeed, you know the esteem which the Holy See has for the activity of the diplomatic missions, a true service rendered to peoples by the presence of their qualified representatives who promote ever more intense exchanges. The international organizations make a sizeable specific contribution in that regard; I gladly greet their representatives among you. My spiritual mission allows me to be a witness of that which unites people as well as the concerns and sufferings which weigh upon them throughout the world. It is for the good of mankind that the Church wishes to act unceasingly, by reason of her experience, while respecting the competences of civil authorities. She believes she has the function of affirming the universal solidarity to which humanity must tend in searching for peace and happiness for every person. 2. For the present generations it is clear that a major preoccupation is that of development. The unequal distribution of resources of all kinds on this planet emphasizes the obvious necessity for an active cooperation among nations so that their members may guarantee one another the conditions of a dignified human life; Economic exchange and cooperation, as we probably now know better, can achieve their goal only in a spirit of solidarity and with respect for the identity of each people, for its culture, environment, and independence. When one speaks of solidarity, one sees immediately that institutional cooperation has as its first goal the good of peoples, the enhancement of their own human resources, the development of their abilities, the improvement of their territory, the acceptance of their particular contribution to the wealth of the human community, even if that wealth is not measured in economic terms. The noble culture of the country that welcomes us, the original traits of its regions, illustrate very well the beauty of a human patrimony that development must not merely preserve, but also bring to fruition. The needs of the less favoured nations, the difficulties which so many human beings have in living are in themselves an appeal for an international cooperation which requires that we act in an ever more circumspect manner. Objectives must be decided harmoniously and take into consideration the immediate needs justifying short term actions, without losing sight of the support of initiatives destined to modify favourably the situation in the long term. I shall not enter into analyses which you already know, but I shall underline some aspects, beginning by hoping that the solidarity of nations may lead to still more progress for the solution of the debt problems of the poorer nations, a question which the Holy See recently dealt with. 3. In the third world and in the more favoured nations, many men and women generously consecrate themselves to development tasks. I would like to pay tribute to the work accomplished by the volunteers who form the non governmental organizations. Without substituting for the action of the States and organizations which unite them, these volunteers can help significantly in understanding the real needs of the poor nations, in making cooperation friendlier and more personal, in developing concrete solidarity, thus contributing

to associate the diverse components of society with the action of the political authorities. In that regard, I would like to pay a special tribute to the dedication of the missionaries. Inspired by the Gospel, they have for a long time been caring for the sick, supporting the most deprived, and educating youth. I also think of those among them who, even in these recent years, have been victims, in certain regions, of unjustified violence. We all hope that men and women, religious or not, who come to the aid of their brothers and sisters as peacemakers, may fulfil their mission in security and friendship.⁴

The prospects for detente which have been manifested in recent years should now promote collaboration of men of science and culture in the whole world on behalf of the development of the third world. In the Encyclical which I devoted to the social problem in order to extend the appeals of my predecessor Paul VI twenty years earlier, I have already invited the nations of the north and south coordinate their means better. Thus the exchange of technology appears to be a growing necessity. Is it not a demand of justice to place our knowledge at the service of everyone? If the inhabitants of the planet are truly succeeding in strengthening peace, could they allow two thirds of humanity to continue to suffer hunger, not to have access to a level of education sufficient to enable them to undertake their own development effectively, to remain deprived of the means of information and communication that are so readily available elsewhere, and even considered indispensable?⁵ More and more, world opinion is becoming aware of the precious good that the earth is together with all that it contains and produces. People speak of the "environment"; it is a matter of the context in which man must live; it involves nature which has been entrusted to him. We know the threats which weigh upon entire regions because of thoughtless exploitation or uncontrolled pollution. To protect against the erosion of the soil, to avoid the spread of toxic substances which are dangerous to man, animals and plants, to safeguard the atmosphere, all these imperatives can be taken into consideration only by an active and informed cooperation, for which frontiers must be crossed without obstacles, and struggles for influence must be overcome. Welcomed on a "Great Island" where such difficulties are felt, I deem it necessary to recall the seriousness of the situation. It is urgent that the international community create the juridical and technical means to guarantee the protection of the environment, to prevent abuses inspired by what must be acknowledged as selfishness, to the detriment of others. The Christian faith believes that God made man the master of the earth. That means that he is responsible for it, that he is more the steward than the discretionary owner. He must pass it on, living and fruitful, to the coming generations.⁶ Among human rights there is one that I would like to highlight within the context of these reflections on the urgency of cooperation in view of development. I am thinking of the right for health, which we must keep in view in that it is part of the basic right to life. The world's populations are in a state of dramatic imbalance, in vast areas the climate, the lack of hygiene, malnutrition and ignorance also leave very many human beings defenceless. I would like to express here the admiration inspired by doctors and health care personnel, both autochthonous and those who have come from other countries, by reason of their fraternal and disinterested work, and their competence, often when they lack the means. I would like to encourage the international organizations in their patient efforts to assure prevention of disease by vaccination drives and other methods; I also hope that their workers receive more and more support and understanding from families, authorities, and from those who can augment their means for serving the health of children, men and women who are weakened by disease. This necessary work is a condition for the numerous young people of the third world to reach adulthood with the strength and the equilibrium they need to assume their responsibilities in society. Speaking of the young people, I would like to repeat here a grave concern which their spokesmen mentioned yesterday in Alarobia Stadium. It concerns drugs, a scourge that is found at the cross roads of many human factors. It is an evil that is spreading throughout the world. A true mobilization is needed on the part of educators, of course, but also on the part of leaders. We cannot accept this trafficking in death. It is obviously necessary to suppress it; however, we must look even further, to prevent the production of these dangerous substances, help the farmers who derive their income from them to achieve a

reconversion that will save them from misery. Out of sheer respect for human dignity, the authorities must not fail to act in this regard. I have just touched on a sensitive point in the hope that joint efforts will free young people from such a scourge. There is a fundamental reality about which I would like to repeat a word of concern which it suggests, namely, the family. We know the destabilization that it is experiencing. In the third world traditional structures are often upset by changing conditions of life. Pressures are exerted that can do violence to the basic freedom to establish a home and transmit life. The preparation of the young people to exercise their responsibilities as spouses and parents is a legitimate objective, but one cannot seek to modify behaviour by pressures that are contrary to sound ethics. We hope that among the less favoured peoples the family institution will receive support to promote the happiness of its members.⁷ Ladies and gentlemen, the thoughts which I have just presented ultimately concern the search for the well being of people and the harmony of their common life, that is, peace. Through the numerous components of development, it is peace that is affirmed, it is man who can make a success of his life, by finding authentic freedom. In concluding my address, I want to express anew the great appreciation which I have for your many contributions to the realization of these essential objectives. Through you I greet the nations which you represent, and I offer them my good wishes for prosperity. I pray the Almighty to give you his gifts and

blessings.

**L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English n.21 p.3.*
