



The Holy See

PASTORAL JOURNEY
TO BENIN, UGANDA AND KHARTOUM (SUDAN)

VISIT TO THE ANGLICAN SHRINE OF NAMUGONGO IN UGANDA

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

*Nakiyanja (Uganda)
Sunday, 7 February 1993*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

1. "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 1: 2). With these words of the Apostle Paul, I am pleased to greet the *leaders and members of the Christian Churches and Ecclesial Communities in Uganda*. Through you, I extend my cordial greetings to all Christ's followers in Uganda.

Our meeting today at Nakiyanja evokes the memory of those early Christians of Uganda, *both Anglicans and Catholics*, who gave their lives for their faith in Jesus Christ. Their example reminds us of the immense power of Christ's grace, which can transform apparent powerlessness into strength, sorrow into joy and death into eternal life. The mystery of the Cross was vividly present at the birth of Christianity in Uganda. Let us pray that its redemptive power will sustain the Christians of today in their witness to the Gospel and in the quest for full unity in faith, hope and love.

2. Commitment to work for the unity of Christians is demanded of all the baptized. We learn this from the Apostle Paul, who tells us: "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ... for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3: 27-28). By virtue of their common Baptism, *Christians share a responsibility to bring about the unity willed by our Lord Jesus Christ*. On the night before he died, Jesus prayed that "they may all be one, even as you, Father, are in me and I

in you, that they may also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (Jn. 17: 21). May our meeting today help us to give a fitting response to that prayer.

Here in Uganda, I am pleased to note the significant initiatives for Christian unity carried out within the framework of the *Uganda Joint Christian Council*. Especially in recent years, the Council has played an important role in the work for peace and reconciliation among all Ugandans.

3. Dear Friends: our presence here today is a sign of a new readiness on the part of separated Christians to work together for full unity. The divisions still existing among us impair the vitality of the Gospel and become a scandal to the world, particularly when we appear to proclaim a "Kingdom divided against itself" (Lk. 11: 17). By our divisions the credibility of the Gospel is weakened.

Christian unity must of course be implored as a *gift of God*, and we are confident that it will be granted in accordance with the Lord's will. Christians must never cease to *pray and sacrifice for unity*. They are also called to support the efforts at *theological dialogue, mutual witness and practical cooperation* undertaken by their respective communities. Such cooperation among Christians "vividly expresses that bond which already unites them, and it sets in clearer relief the features of Christ the Servant" (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 12). Here in Uganda, cooperation in the health-care and social fields is being promoted by the Joint Christian Council. Other forms of ecumenical cooperation include the work of joint Bible translation and community development. These are good examples of what Christians can do together in their common witness, particularly on behalf of the people of Uganda, who hunger and thirst for life in God through fellowship with Jesus his Son.

Ecumenical cooperation, important as it is, must not become an end in itself, because this would obscure its real purpose, which is the quest for *full visible unity* among separated Christians. For this reason, some forum for ongoing reflection on the reasons for joint ecumenical work would be helpful. I am aware that the Kampala Ecumenical Study Group, with the support of the various Church leaders, has served a valuable function in this regard.

4. As I have said on a number of occasions, the Catholic Church is firmly committed to the ecumenical movement and to fostering cooperation between separated Christians (Cf. John Paul II, *Address to the Sacred College of Cardinals*, 28 June 1985; *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 32). In place of the suspicion, distrust and antagonism which all too often have marred relations between Christians in Uganda in the past, the Catholic Church desires to give support and encouragement to all efforts to promote the unity of all believers in the bond of peace (Cf. Eph. 4: 3).

Dear brothers and sisters: it is my fervent hope and prayer that your desire for the unity of all Christians will increase day by day, in answer to the Saviour's prayer "that they may all be one" (Jn. 17: 21). Upon all of you I invoke the Lord's abundant blessings.

Remarks of the Pope at the conclusion of the visit to the Shrine:

Thank you very much for your hospitality. It is worth saying the emotion I experience at this place of the martyrdom of your ancestors, the Uganda Martyrs, both together, Anglicans and Catholics, burnt by the fire. It was the fire of the Holy Spirit, burnt in the heart and the unity of Jesus Christ! It is my desire that this fire of the Holy Spirit will bring us together in the same Church, in the same unity of Jesus Christ through his Holy Spirit.

Thank you very much for your hospitality. God bless you.

© Copyright 1993 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana