



The Holy See

PASTORAL JOURNEY
TO BENIN, UGANDA AND KHARTOUM (SUDAN)

**ELEVATION OF THE SHRINE OF THE UGANDA MARTYRS
TO THE STATUS OF MINOR BASILICA**

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE BISHOPS OF UGANDA***

*Kampala (Uganda)
Sunday, 7 February 1993*

My dear Brothers in the Episcopate of Uganda,

I had prepared a document to be read, it will be handed out personally to every one of you. Now I express my gratitude to you for this invitation to your house of the Episcopal Conference, my gratitude for the words of Archbishop Wamala, your President, and also my gratitude for your invitation to Uganda.

It was some months ago, in May, that you invited me. I was not so convinced that I should come. I thought, still Pope Paul was in Uganda, the first and only visitor, my great predecessor. Why should I go there the second time? But then comes a good, a very good fellow, a Cardinal, an African Cardinal, and he insisted on my going for the second time, but not to Uganda, to Benin, and so my limited conviction, my limited conviction at last became larger. Then I saw that all my collaborators, all the personalities in the Vatican, especially Archbishop Ruffini – all the visits are in his hands – were convinced that it was necessary to go. So I became convinced also.

The last reason was Bakhita – Josephine Bakhita – the Uganda Martyrs, canonized; Josephine Bakhita, recently beatified. What does this name mean, this poor slave of Sudan, and Sudan is your neighbour? In this neighbourhood it was quite clear that it is an appeal of Providence to go to

Africa, to go also to Benin for the second time, to go also to Uganda for the first time and for the second time, and to go only to Khartoum.

So I should say that after my visit here, especially today, this great celebration of the Uganda Martyrs, I am deeply convinced that it was necessary to be here, no doubt. No doubt, it was necessary to be here. It is a great moment in the evangelization of the world, not only of your continent, of the world. This witness, this witness, this martyrdom of the Uganda Martyrs.

So I express my gratitude for your invitation to come to Uganda. I am convinced it means that you have convinced me, you have won the contest, won the contest with the Pope! Since we have another plan to meet again this evening in the Nunciature, it is better not to make this meeting too long in order to have more time for the other meeting.

I should add that the whole visit is very nice, it is very warm, not only climatically, climatically it is not so warm as in Benin, but this warmth is psychological, a temperature of the heart... this very heart. Sometimes I think I cannot endure it, but then I am enduring it. Thank you for these good people, good, hearty people.

My last words are a remembrance of my visit today to the Shrine of the Uganda Martyrs and of the historic visit of Pope Paul VI to Uganda: I am pleased to elevate the Shrine to the status of a Minor Basilica. Your desire and your trust is over!