



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF POPE PAUL VI TO THE PILGRIMS FROM NIGERIA

Friday, 28 June 1963

We are truly happy to receive and to greet Our Venerable Brother Godfrey Okoye, Bishop of Port Harcourt, together with this imposing group of pilgrims from Nigeria.

It seems to Us almost as if We were meeting old friends again, for you will remember the visit which We had the pleasure of making, during the summer of last year, to your great and most interesting country, on the invitation of Our Venerable Brother Sergio Pignedoli, Our Apostolic Delegate in West and Central Africa. We still bear in Our memory and in Our heart the places We then visited and the persons We then met. We still recall the courtesy with which We were received by the Civil Authorities, and the friendship which was immediately offered Us by the Bishops and the Missionaries of that land.

We have always before Our mind the vision of your churches, your hospitals and your schools; but first and foremost in Our recollection is the goodness, the piety, the affability of Our beloved Nigerian Catholics. We will never be able to forget, for example, the welcome given Us by Our Venerable Brother Archbishop Heerey of Onitsha and all his excellent people; that which We received at Enugus; and also in various other cities of Nigeria.

Hence We are happy to see here today an important group of representatives of the Nigerian people, and to offer you, and through you all the Catholics of your Nation, Our affectionate greetings.

Indeed, We would avail Ourselves of this happy occasion to send the expression of Our most sincere good wishes to the Catholic Missions of Nigeria; and also to those of all Africa. With admiration and pleasure do We salute the awakening of Africa to civil maturity, and consequently to freedom, independence, and progress; and, while We recognize the merit of those who have helped the

African peoples to undertake the ways of civilization, We nourish the hope that those peoples may, all of them, be able to enjoy 'the rights proper to modern civil societies and thus, fraternally aided by those countries economically and culturally more developed, may all attain, in freedom and peace, that prosperity which corresponds to their common human dignity.

And We are confident that Our Catholic sons and daughters in Africa will prove to be the most loyal, the most industrious, and the most virtuous citizens of their respective ethnic communities.

Bring, then, these Our good wishes to your African brothers; tell them that the Catholic Church is proud and happy to number them among her children; tell them that the Pope esteems and loves them; tell them that We have high hopes for the future of Christian Africa; and bear to all the Catholics of Nigeria, to the Bishops, the priests, the missionaries, and the seminarians; to the Sisters, to the youth, to the children; and to Our beloved and Venerable Brother the Apostolic Delegate, Our paternal Apostolic Blessing.