



The Holy See

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

HOLY MASS AT "ASCOT RACE COURSE"

HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II

*Bulawayo (Zimbabwe)
Monday, 12 September 1988*

"Come, *let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,*
to the Temple of God of Jacob
that he may teach us his ways
so that we may walk in his paths" (*Is. 2, 3*)

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

1. This invitation *of the Prophet Isaiah*, an invitation of the Old Covenant, *finds its fulfilment* with the coming of the New Covenant, the new and eternal Covenant in the Blood of Christ: in his Cross and Resurrection.

Behold, the Apostles "*set out for Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had arranged to meet them*" (*Matth. 28, 16*).

Christ will soon go to the Father. Before departing, however, he will say to them:

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations; baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you And know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time" (*Matth. 28, 18-20*).

2. “*Make disciples of all the nations; baptize them*”.

This command of Christ has already been carried out, in fact it is constantly being carried out, in the midst of all the nations of the earth. *It has happened and is constantly happening in your midst*, on the African continent, in this nation which is called “Zimbawe”. In fact, the first efforts of evangelization began here more than four hundred years ago, efforts which were inspired by a great love for the Risen Lord and which yet failed to establish among you a lasting Christian community. It was not until 1879 that a sustained missionary effort by the Catholic Church could be achieved. But from that time forward, your country has witnessed and been blessed by the constant fulfilment of Christ’s command.

Over the past century, the missionary enterprise has experienced numerous changes, changes in the choices of priorities and changes in the methods employed. But at every stage *teaching has played a central role*. Jesus said: “Make disciples... baptize them... teach them”. And that is what you have done.

The prodigious result of evangelization is clearly evident in the Church in modern Zimbabwe, and in this Eucharistic celebration today. I assure you, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, that it is a great joy for me to be here among you to witness at first hand the marvellous works that *Divine Providence* is accomplishing in this land, and to celebrate together with you these Sacred Mysteries.

In the Holy Name of Jesus I greet you all: in the first place the Bishop of Bulawayo, Bishop Karlen, and with him all my brother bishops who share with me, the Bishop of Rome, the responsibility of shepherding the flock of Christ and proclaiming the Good News of salvation. In a special way, I greet Bishop Ignatius Prieto on the twenty-fifth anniversary of his episcopal ordination, and also on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Diocese of Hwange. To Bishop Prieto and to all his people I extend my congratulations and prayerful good wishes.

I also offer fraternal greetings to the priests, religious and laity who represent all the parish communities of this vast region of Zimbabwe known as Matabeleland. It is in the local Christian communities that the message of Christ is first received and fostered, and it is there that it must daily be put into practice. In the parish communities, faith and hope and love are the guiding principles of your lives.

I know that there are many who have not been able to come here today, even though they very much wanted to do so. I therefore ask you, my friends in Christ, to take back to your local parishes the warm greetings of the Pope. Assure them of my pastoral love in the Sacred Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ.

3. At this celebration of the Eucharist, I ask you to join me in giving thanks to God for the

achievements of evangelization in Zimbabwe and to pray for the continuing success of evangelizing efforts.

What is evangelization?

We could answer with the words of the Apostle Paul in his Letter to the Romans:

“If *your lips* confess that Jesus is Lord and if you believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, then *you will be saved*” (*Rom.* 10, 9). Evangelization means accepting God’s revelation of himself in Jesus Christ. It involves *accepting in faith what God has revealed to humanity*, accepting the truth about the Crucified and Risen Christ (as we say in the Creed, “He was crucified, suffered death and was buried; on the third day, he rose again”).

It is precisely this Christ who “*is the Lord of all*”. As Lord, as the one to whom “all authority in heaven and on earth has been given”, Christ *distributes to everyone the riches of salvation* which he won for us by the sacrifice of his life on the Cross. The riches of salvation are the *riches of the love and grace of God*. We share in these riches through faith. Saint Paul says: “By believing from the heart you are made righteous; by confessing with your lips you are saved”.

It is a question then of a *faith accepted with the heart* (with the intellect and will), a faith rooted in our inmost depths. And then, *it is professed with our lips and with our works*. “For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (*Ibid.* 10, 13).

4. Such faith *helps us to look at the world in a new way*, to look at all that surrounds us in a new light. It enables us to see the whole of creation as *the handiwork of God, his gift*. Then, through creation we can turn to the Creator and glorify him with our hearts and our lips; we glorify him after the manner of the splendid *Psalms of today’s Liturgy*.

“Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you. *The earth has yielded its fruit* for God, our God, has blessed us.

May God still give us his blessing till *the ends of the earth revere him*” (*Ps.* 67 (66), 6-8).

Faith in the Crucified and Risen Christ also *inspires us to transform the world in the Spirit of God*. But first it means a transformation of the human heart, which has its consequences in society and in relationships between individuals and nations.

Let us return again to the words of the Prophet *Isaiah*:

“Come, let us go up to the mountain of Yahweh, to the Temple of the God of Jacob that *he may teach us his ways* so that *we may walk in his paths*; since the Law will go out from Zion, and the

oracle of Yahweh from Jerusalem. He will wield authority over the nations and adjudicate between many peoples; these will hammer their swords into ploughshares, their spears into sickles. Nation will not lift sword against nation, there will be no more training for war. O House of Jacob, come, Let us walk in the light of Yahweh” (*Is. 2, 3-5*).

5. Evangelization *begins in the human heart*, in that intimate dialogue between each of us and God, where we recognize our sins and acknowledge our need for a Saviour, where we come to believe and profess with our lips that Jesus Christ is Lord.

But faith can never remain a purely private matter. For the Sacrament of Baptism makes us members of the Christian community, and we are expected to become active members of a local Church; we are expected to listen to God’s word, take part in the Sacred Liturgy, live in fraternal charity. And our faith in Christ opens our eyes to see beyond our own parish community, to the life of the *universal Church* and *the needs of the world* around us. The Church is present in the world *for the sake of the world*. And each member shares a responsibility in bringing God’s love to the world.

Here in Zimbabwe, this means that you are called by Christ to respond to the needs and difficulties of your fellow citizens. We think immediately of the *great suffering caused by war*. It is only eight years since your struggle for national independence was brought to an end. Even after that, many people in Matabeleland did not find true peace. How the civilian population continued to suffer from guerilla warfare and other forms of violence! As recently as April of this year *Brother Killian Knoerl* of this diocese was a victim of such violence.

I know that you yourselves have not only suffered but you have also tried to help the many victims of violence: the crippled, the maimed, the bereaved, those unjustly deprived of property and savings. At the same time, you have had to work patiently but continually for *reconciliation and peace*, a goal not easily achieved after years of conflict. You have been trying to bring about the fulfilment of the Prophecy of Isaiah, where he foretells that the people “will hammer their swords into ploughshares, their spears into sickles. Nation will not lift sword against nation, there will be no more training for war”.

Yes, “no more training for war”. But there will be *training for peace and development* and especially *training in the truth*. That is why education is so important in both development and evangelization. Training implies commitment to the apostolate of teaching and to schools, particularly for young people. The future of Zimbabwe depends on it. The future of the Church in Zimbabwe will be shaped by it. For education is essential for human development. As Pope Paul VI reminded us: “*Between evangelization and human advancement – development and liberation – there are profound links*” (Pauli VI *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 31). Since every person has social and economic needs as well as spiritual ones, the Church can never ignore any aspect of what it means to be fully human. Her educational programmes aim to develop the whole person – body

and soul.

The Church has great concern for *the family*, the family as a whole and its individual members. In your country, as in most countries of the world, the stability of family life is being seriously threatened by problems such as sexual immorality and irregular unions as well as economic insecurity and inadequate housing. Efforts to strengthen family life and to teach the true nature of marriage need to begin in the local parish communities, where individuals and their concrete circumstances are best known. Accordingly, the work of evangelization, which is the very reason for the existence of the Church, must also engage the family, and through the family make *active disciples of every member of the Church*.

6. It was for the sake of evangelization that Christ sent his Apostles into the whole world, and he wanted every follower of his to take an active share in it. This mission must be carried out in such a way that the lives of *all who believe* in Christ will always *abound in good works*, so that they will bring to individuals and nations *true development and progress*.

But in order that this mission may be really effective, we must keep in mind the words of Saint Paul to the Romans:

“They will not ask his help unless they believe in him, and *they will not believe in him unless they have heard of him*, and they will not hear of him unless they get a preacher, and *they will never have a preacher unless one is sent*” (Rom.10, 14-15).

But who is to be sent? Who are the evangelizers? Pope Paul VI answered these questions very clearly when he said: “It is the whole Church that receives the mission to evangelize, and the work of each individual member is important for the whole... *The person who has been evangelized goes on to evangelize others*. Here lies the test of truth, the touchstone of evangelization: it is unthinkable that a person should accept the word and give himself to the Kingdom without becoming a person who bears witness to it and proclaims it in his turn” (Pauli VI *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 15.24). And so, in your Christian communities in Zimbabwe, those who have themselves suffered are best equipped to console and encourage others. As Saint Paul puts it, “(God) comforts us in all our sorrows, so that we can offer others, in their sorrows, the consolation that we have received from God ourselves” (2 Cor. 1, 4).

The best apostles to youth will often be young people themselves, young men and women who rejoice in their faith in Christ and who know the importance of daily prayer. And married couples whose love for one another has been sealed in the Sacrament of Matrimony and built up in daily sacrifice are best able to help other husbands and wives to enter more fully into the mystery of Christ’s love for the Church. Family circles, retreats for married people and marriage enrichment programmes are also suitable means for this marriage and family apostolate.

But our families and small Christian communities, our parishes and dioceses, also need pastors and guardians, servants who devote themselves exclusively to the care of God's flock. We need, in other words, good *priests and men and women religious*. Without their prayer and dedicated service, evangelization could lose its sense of direction and, above all, its awareness of the universal dimension of the Church.

7. Today *the Bishop of Rome*, mindful of his apostolic inheritance from Saints Peter and Paul, *joins you in giving thanks for the fruit of evangelization which you have already received*.

Truly, "the earth has yielded its fruit". Indeed, "God, our God, has blessed us". And yet we know that, "Not everyone... listens to the Good News" (*Rom. 10, 16*). So Christ said and continues to say: "Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations".

As I stand here in this land, on this continent, I invite you: *let us lift our hearts to him who is "the Lord of the harvest"* and let us never cease to pray *that he "send labourers to his harvest"* (*Matth. 9, 38*).

To his harvest!

For this harvest is indeed rich!

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