



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO TANZANIA, BURUNDI,
RWANDA, AND THE IVORY COAST

PRIESTLY ORDINATIONS

HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II

Dar-es-Salaam, Jangwani Grounds
Sunday, 2 September 1990

Yesu asema: "Mimi ndimi Mchungaji Mwema... autoaye uhai wake kwa ajili ya kondoo wake. Nawajua walio wangu, nao walio wangu wanijua mimi".

(Jesus says: "I am the Good Shepherd... who lays down his life for his sheep. I know my own and my own know me" (*Jo. 10, 11. 14*).

Ndugu zangu katika Kristu!

(Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ)!

Wanangu wapendwa!

(Sons and Daughters)!

Tumsifu Yesu Kristu!

(Praised be Jesus Christ)!

1. Ninayo furaha kubwa sana kuwa pamoja nanyi!

(I am very happy to be with you)!

Today, in Dar-es-Salaam, we join together in celebrating the Eucharist, which is the sacrament of the Church's unity as the one flock of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Jesus is present in our midst! We hear His words, the words of everlasting life (Cfr. *Jo. 6, 68*), and we receive His Body and Blood, offered on the Cross for the forgiveness of our sins. Yes, the Lord is among us— *the*

Good Shepherd, who lays down His life for His sheep!

The Pope, the Successor of the Apostle Peter, has come to Tanzania to pray with you and confirm you in your Catholic faith; to enter into a spiritual dialogue with all the people of this vast and beautiful country. *Ninatoa salamu za upendo kwa Wakristu wote nchini Tanzania na kwa namna ya pekee ninamsalimu Mwadhamu Kardinali Laurean Rugambwa na Askofu Mkuu Polycarp Pengo, wa Jimbo Kuu la Dar-es-Salaam, na ndugu zangu Maaskofu wa Majimbo ya Arusha, Dodoma, Mahenge, Mbulu, Morogoro, Moshi, Same, Tanga na Zanzibar.*

(I greet with affection the members of the Church in Tanzania! My special greeting goes to Cardinal Laurean Rugambwa and Archbishop Polycarp Pengo of the Archdiocese of Dar-es-Salaam, and to my Brother Bishops of the Dioceses of Arusha, Dodoma, Mahenge, Mbulu, Morogoro, Moshi, Same, Tanga and Zanzibar).

I greet the *clergy and religious* from throughout Tanzania who are your guides in the way of faith, hope and love. I express also my deep gratitude and esteem to the President of the United Republic of Tanzania and to the *civil authorities* present at this Mass, and to all those who assisted in any way in the planning and preparation of my Pastoral Visit to your land.

In a particular way, my greeting goes to *those who are being ordained to the priesthood*. From their families and parishes these young men have been called to be configured to Christ, the eternal High Priest, in order that they in turn might become shepherds of His people, preachers of His word and ministers of His sacraments (Cfr. *Lumen Gentium*, 28). Jesus gives them *a share in His own priesthood* so that they may act in His person to offer the sacrifice of the New Covenant in the Eucharistic liturgy, to exercise the ministry of reconciliation and help all the faithful to live in holiness and peace, according to the vocation that each one has received as a member of Christ's Body, the Church (Cfr. *ibid*).

2. In today's First Reading, the Lord tells the Prophet Jeremiah that his vocation *was part of God's eternal plan* even before he was born:

"Neno la Bwana liliinjia, kusema,
Kabla sijakuumba katika tumbo nalikujua,
na kabla hujatoka tumboni, nalikutakasa,
nikakuweka kuwa nabii wa Mataifa".

*("The Word of the Lord was addressed to me, saying):
(Before I formed you in the womb I knew you);
(before you came to birth I consecrated you);
(I have appointed you as a prophet to the nations") (Jer. 1, 4-5).*

These words remind us that *each person has a place in God's plan* and that *each of us should carefully listen to God's voice in prayer in order to discover the special calling we have received in Christ*. In many other ways too we learn to know God's will: through important events in our lives, through the example and wisdom of others, and through the prayerful judgment of His Church. Among all these channels of God's grace, the family has a special role in fostering the Christian vocation of its members. In a very real way, each Christian family is a "*school of Christ*", a place where children first learn to know and love God, to obey His word and to respond to His call. In families "which are alive with the spirit of faith, love and reverence" (*Optatam Totius*, 2), the light of faith can shine forth in the lives of children, and the seed of a vocation can receive the nourishment it needs to blossom and grow strong.

*Leo napenda kutoa heshima zangu kwa familia za kikristu hapa Tanzania.
(Today the Pope wishes to pay homage to the Christian families of Tanzania).*

To all of you I express the Church's deep esteem for your commitment to the vocation which you have received from God. At this Mass of Ordination, I also express my gratitude *to the parents of those who will soon become priests*. In the homes which you have created, these young men first discovered the mystery of God's love. I pray that your homes will always be filled with the warmth and joy of that love!

3. Dear friends: let us think of the many *concrete ways* in which the Christian vocation, and the call to priesthood in particular, is fostered by Catholic families. In the first place, *families are schools of prayer: Familia ni shule ya sala*. A household marked by prayer will daily instill in children a lively sense of the need to turn to God with confidence at all times, and especially when life's inevitable difficulties and trials come their way. How important this lesson is for those who will become priests! Since the priest must teach others to pray, both as individuals and as a liturgical community, he must himself be a man of deep prayer and spiritual maturity.

Families are also *schools of fidelity and love: Familia ni shule ya uaminifu na upendo*. Within the Sacrament of Marriage, the fidelity of husband and wife in living out their marriage vows and in raising their children becomes an effective sign of *the undying faithfulness of Christ to His Church*. For his part, the priest is called to be faithful to a life of celibacy as a sign of his consecration to Christ and to the service of the Church. From his parents a priest can first learn the meaning and understand the value of life-long fidelity to God's call; *where marital fidelity is held in high esteem, the priest will value his calling and its demands all the more*.

In a similar way, the relationship of love and sacrifice which unites parents and their children makes the family *a school of obedience and trust: Familia ni shule ya utii na kuaminiana*. These virtues, which are often first learned in the early years of one's life, are paramount in the life and ministry of a priest, for he will often be called upon to submit his will freely to the decisions and judgment of his superiors for the sake of the Gospel and the good of the ecclesial community.

Finally, *families are schools of mercy: Familia ni shule ya huruma*. The priest is called to be a dispenser of God's mercy, through the ministry of the sacraments, especially in his willing and sensitive encounter with souls in the Sacrament of Penance. If he has been raised in a loving Christian family, he will have learned the meaning of mercy from his parents, and especially from the acts of mercy and mutual forgiveness expressed in family life. For do we not learn to be merciful from the experience of mercy which we have received? Just as we freely receive forgiveness and new life in Christ from God "who is rich in mercy" (*Eph. 2, 4*), so too we must generously share these gifts with others.

4. Na sasa niseme machache kwa hawa watakaopewa daraja ya Upadre.
(*I now address a special word to those who are about to be ordained priests*).

Dear young brothers in the Lord: how often have you heard the words of Saint Paul proclaimed in the Second Reading of today's Mass? The Apostle says: "It is not ourselves that we are preaching, but Christ Jesus as the Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake" (*2 Cor. 4, 5*). Take these words to heart as a programme for your life and ministry! "*Kwa maana hatujihubiri wenyewe, bali Kristo Yesu*". *Yeye ni Bwana, nasi ni watumishi wake tusiostahili*. (*Yes, "it is not ourselves that we are preaching, but Christ Jesus!" He is the Lord, and we are his unworthy servants*).

In the end, as Saint Paul says, "we are only the earthenware jars that hold this treasure, to make it clear that such an overwhelming power comes from God and not from us" (*Ibid. 7*).

These words should inspire in each of you *a deep humility* as you realize that it is only "by an act of mercy" (*Ibid. 1*), that you have received this ministry from Christ. *All Christians are called to die to sin and selfishness and live humbly the vocation that God has given them*. How much more those who have been made "stewards of the mysteries of God" (*1 Cor. 4, 1*)? And like all disciples, you must give evidence that you have learned to place God's will above your own desires and projects and to spend yourselves generously in the service of your brothers and sisters, especially the weak and the poor.

5. Jesus says: "I lay down my life for my sheep. And *there are other sheep I have that are not of this fold, and these I have to lead as well*. They too will listen to my voice, and there will be only one flock and one shepherd" (*Io. 10, 15-16*).

Dear sons: The one flock of which Jesus speaks is *the Church*, the assembly of those men and women of every time and place who have been gathered by God's word and made holy by the Blood of the Lamb. The small group of disciples who gathered in prayer with Mary, the Mother of Jesus, in the Upper Room at Pentecost were the beginning of that one flock. And through the continued protection and prayers of *Mary, Mother of the Church*, that flock will continue to grow throughout the world, bringing the light of Christ to all peoples, until the end of time!

By God's grace, you have been called to gather and feed that flock. Strengthened by the Sacrament which you are about to receive, you will be *sent forth into the world* to bring the Gospel message of peace and reconciliation to all whom you meet. *Huu ndio wito wenu bora sana kama watumishi wa Yesu Kristu aliye Mchungaji Mwema*. Ninarudia neno la Bwana alilosema kwa Nabii Yermia: "*Usiogope*". (*This is your sublime vocation as ministers of Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd! Today, I repeat, to you the Lord's words to Jeremiah: "Do not be afraid!"*) (Jer. 1, 8).

Yes! Do not be afraid, for you have heard the Lord's promise: "I am with you to protect you... There! I am putting my words into your mouth!" (*Ibid.* 1, 8-9).

Through the power of His Spirit, God "has shone in our minds *to radiate the light of the knowledge of His glory, the glory on the face of Christ*" (2 Cor. 4, 6). As ministers of God's grace in the Church, may you grow in the image of Him in whom the fullness of God was pleased to dwell (Cfr. Col. 2, 9). To be an *Alter Christus* is not a title of human dignity but an obligation to be like Him "who came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many" (Matth. 20, 28).

May Almighty God help you to live fully the sublime vocation He has given you in Christ! Ninamwomba Mungu Mwenyezi, Baba, Mwana na Roho Mtakatifu, awashushie wingi wa baraka zake ninyi mtakaopewa daraja ya Upadre na nyote mlio hapa leo. Amina. (*Upon you, dear brothers, and upon all present here today, I invoke the abundant blessings of Almighty God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen*).