



The Holy See

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

EUCCHARISTIC CELEBRATION IN MWANZA, TANZANIA

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

Kawekamo Grounds

Tuesday, 4 September 1990

Yesu asema: "Amri yangu ndiyo hii, Mpendane, kama nilivyowapenda ninyi".

(Jesus says: "This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you" (Jo. 15, 12).

Ndugu zangu katika Kristu,

(Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ),

1. Ninayo furaha kubwa sana kupata fursa ya kuadhimisha Ibada ya Ekaristi katika *Kanda hii ya Ziwa*. Ninatoa shukrani kwa Askofu Mkuu Anthony Mayala kwa maneno yake mazuri ya kunikaribisha, na ninawasalimu kwa upendo mkuu *ndugu zangu Maaskofu, mapadre, watawa na walei wote* wa Jimbo Kuu la Mwanza na wa Majimbo ya Bukoba, Geita, Musoma, Rulenge na Shinyanga. Pia ninawasalimu kwa namna ya pekee *viongozi wa Serikali na wa siasa, wawakilishi wa Jumuiya mbalimbali za kikristu na wa madhehebu mengine na watu wote*.

(To all of you I express my great joy at this opportunity to celebrate the Eucharist here in the Lake Region of Tanzania. I thank Archbishop Anthony Mayala for his gracious words of welcome, and I greet with affection my Brother Bishops and all the clergy, religious and laity of the Archdiocese of Mwanza and the Dioceses of Bukoba, Geita, Musoma, Rulenge and Shinyanga. My cordial greetings also go to your esteemed Government and political leaders, as well as to the representatives of other Christian communities and other religions and to all people of goodwill).

At this Liturgy, we celebrate in a special way *the sacredness of human life*. The gift of life comes from God and its sacredness is revealed in the holy institution of Marriage and in the family. It is most fitting, therefore, that at this Eucharist married couples and parents will renew their marriage vows and that young children will make their First Holy Communion. In this way the whole family is represented as the Church "tastes the goodness of the Lord" (Cfr. *Ps. 33, 9*), and is strengthened in fidelity and love in the sight of God.

"Love one another as I have loved you" (*Io. 15, 12*). This is Jesus' command to His disciples of every age and every place! This is His command to you, the Christians of the Lake Region of Tanzania! The Lord's words have a special *meaning for all those who are married*. The Sacrament of Marriage consecrates before God and the Church the exclusive, faithful and lasting mutual love of a husband and wife. It is God's will that this sacred union exist only between two people. When a man marries a woman he pledges to give his love to her and to her alone. She, in turn, promises the same to him.

2. In the celebration of the Sacrament you tell each other: "I promise to be faithful to you always... to love you and honour you all the days of my life". When these words are spoken, a lasting marriage bond is established between a man and a woman. By its very nature, *this marriage covenant is holy and unbreakable: "Ndoa ni Agano Takatifu"*. It is holy because *it is part of the Creator's plan for the world*. From the very beginning, when God created man and woman, He planned that a man should leave his father and mother and take a wife, and that the two should become one flesh (Cfr. *Gen. 2, 24*). When Jesus said: "what God has united, man must not divide" (*Matth. 19, 6*), He confirmed this truth and taught that *breaking the marriage bond is against God's plan* for human life and love: Kuvunja ndoa hupingana na Mpango wa Mungu kwa maisha ya binadamu, na ni kinyume cha Upendo. Jesus made Marriage a Sacrament of the New Covenant. When two people who are baptized enter into Marriage, their faithful and life-long love becomes an effective and grace-filled sign of Christ's own love, that greater love which Jesus spoke of before His Passion, when He said: "A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends". Through the grace of the Sacrament of Matrimony, the love of Christian couples becomes the mirror of the Lord's everlasting love for his Bride, the Church. Enyi Wapendwa, mlio katika maisha ya ndoa: Kwa kurudia ahadi zenu za ndoa, kila mmoja wenu, anajitoa upya kwa mwenzake, katika maisha ya Utakatifu, ya Imani na yasiyo na ubinafsi, ambayo Kristu aliyadhihirisha kwa kifo chake Msalabani. Ndiyo maana, kurudia ahadi zenu za ndoa ni tendo takatifu. (Dear married couples: In renewing your marriage vows, you renew your commitment to share with each other the holy, unselfish and faithful love which Christ showed for all mankind by dying on the Cross. For this reason, the renewal of your marriage vows is a sacred act). The Sacrament of Marriage is a fountain of grace which, together with the grace of your Baptism and Confirmation, and the strength which comes from the Eucharist, will enable you, day by day, to accept sacrifices for each other's sake, to remain faithful in the face of every difficulty, trial and temptation, and in all ways to fulfill the demands of your calling as Christian married people!

3. By its very nature, *Marriage also gives rise to the family, which is the cradle of love of human society*. Marriage, family and society are interrelated parts of God's plan for the world. As the basic unit of society, *the family has been entrusted by the Creator with the task of transmitting the gift of life, of carrying out the command to "be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and conquer it" (Gen. 1, 28), and of serving human growth and maturity.*

By defending the sacredness of Marriage and family life, the Church is not only being faithful to God's will and plan, but is also providing a needed benefit to society. *Where Marriage and the family are respected and protected, all society becomes stronger and more humane, and the common good is better served: Mkiheshimu na kulinda familia, jamii nzima itaimarika zaidi katika utu na katika kutoa huduma kwa manufaa ya wote.*

Married couples and families need support and encouragement as they carry out their sacred duties. The Church wishes to help married couples as they seek to do God's will in their life together. She wishes to show them the treasures of *wisdom and strength* which God gives to those who *pray and celebrate the Sacraments*. And by her *teaching and the pastoral ministry of her priests and religious* she wishes to help families to live according to God's plan, in joyful communion and mutual help.

4. The Church teaches that every man, woman and child, regardless of race, sex, religion or social condition, has been made in the image and likeness of God (Cfr. *ibid.* 1, 26-27), and has an infinite value in God's eyes. Hence, *the dignity of every human person, from the moment of conception until natural death, must be respected.* This moral duty is especially urgent today, in the face of new dangers and threats to innocent human life and the sanctity of Marriage. Among such threats, I include the "unspeakable crime" of *abortion* (*Gaudium et Spes*, 51), and *methods of birth control that are contrary to the "truth" of married love as a "gift" by which husband and wife become cooperators with God in giving life to a new human person* (Cfr. Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Familiaris Consortio*, 14).

In obedience to the Lord's command— "Love one another as I have loved you" (*Jo.* 15, 12)— you, the Christians of the Lake Region, are challenged to think about the situation in your own country. Do *the elderly, the widowed, the disabled and the lonely* find among you the understanding and support they require? Is the human dignity of all individuals always respected? Or is it threatened by practices such as *uchawi or witchcraft*, which lead those who are involved in it to forms of enslavement and false worship? Likewise, although there are many authentic and praiseworthy human values associated with *traditional marriage customs such as mahari*, do not excesses and abuses of these customs lead to attitudes which judge the dignity and worth of persons only on the basis of wealth and possessions?

Each of us has *a fundamental duty to be a Christian neighbour* to others, especially the poor, the weak, the suffering and the downtrodden. I pray that Tanzania's Catholic families will always be

shining examples of love and concern for others. I earnestly hope they will *welcome, respect and serve* the least of their brothers and sisters, since they know that every human person is a child of God in whom we meet Christ Himself (Cfr. Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Familiaris Consortio*, 64).

5. Dear brothers and sisters: This celebration of the sacredness of human life in marriage and the family is made more meaningful by the fact that *there are children here today who are coming to the Lord's table for the first time*, children who owe their life and Christian upbringing to you, the Catholic parents of Tanzania. Today, for the first time, these children *will receive the greatest of sacramental graces*: Leo watoto hawa watapokea Sakramenti ya Ekaristi kwa mara ya kwanza. As they receive the Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus, their hearts will be filled with the *saving power of His love*, revealed to us in His Death on the Cross.

Enyi watoto wapendwa: Yesu atawapa zawadi yenye thamani kubwa kwa sababu *ninyi ni wana wa familia yake, yaani Kanisa*. Mmejifunza kutoka kwa wazazi na walimu wenu, jinsi ya kumpenda Yesu. Mnajua kuwa Yeye ni Mwana wa Mungu, anayesamehe dhambi na kutufungulia mlango wa Mbingu. Naye Yesu anawapenda sana, *hivyo nanyi kwa upande wenu mmpende kwa moyo wenu wote*.

(Dear young friends: Jesus gives this precious gift to you because you are members of His family, the Church. From your parents and your teachers you have already learned to love Jesus. You know that He is God's Son, who forgives your sins and opens for you the gates of heaven. Since Jesus loves you so much, you will want to love Him in return with all your heart).

Today the Pope asks you to remain close to Jesus at all times, in union with your brothers and sisters in the Church, until the day when we see Him face to face, together with Mary our Mother and all the saints, in our home in heaven!

6. In every celebration of the Sacraments, we are renewed by the Father's love, the love which He showed by sending us His beloved Son. Today, at this Mass, Jesus once again offers us the gift of His Body and Blood, and He repeats to each of us: "As the Father has loved Me, so I have loved you. Remain in My love" (*Io. 15, 9*).

"Remain in My love!" *Love demands fidelity: Upendo unadai uaminifu*. It calls for *perseverance in doing good*. That is why Jesus says: "*If you keep My commandments you will remain in My love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in His love*" (*Ibid. 15, 10*). May the power of that love be your support and encouragement, *dear married people and parents*. May the love of the Lord Jesus also help you, *dear children*, to be always friends of Jesus. *This love—this faithful love— is the wellspring of joy, the source of true happiness, both here on earth and for all eternity.*

Yesu asema: "Hayo nimewaambia, ili furaha yangu iwe ndani yenu, na *furaha yenu itimizwe*". Hilo

ndilo jambo analowatakia Bwana Yesu.

Na kwa njia ya sala na utumishi wangu na wa Maaskofu, pamoja na Mapadre, na kwa njia ya mfano na mafundisho ya masista na makatekista, Kanisa linawatakia heri hiyo hiyo.

"Mpendane kama nilivyowapenda ninyi". Amina.

(Jesus says: "I have told you this so that My own joy may be in you, and your joy be complete" (Jo. 15, 11).

(This is what Jesus wishes for you).

(This is what the Church asks for you through the prayers and ministry of the Pope and all your Bishops and priests, and through the example and teaching of the Sisters and catechists)

(Love one another so that your joy may be complete. Amen).