



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC PILGRIMAGE TO AFRICA

(MAY 2-12, 1980)

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II AT THE ARRIVAL IN GHANA

Accra

Thursday, 8 May 1980

Mr President,

1. Your kind welcome on my arrival in Ghana gives me much pleasure, and I am grateful for the expression of esteem which you have directed to my person in your own name and on behalf of all the people of this country. On my part I assure you and all your fellow-citizens of my respect and friendship.

It is indeed a great joy to be in Ghana. Yours is a country blessed in so many ways. The rich variety of nature - low coastlands and high plains, forests and savannahs - marks the home of a people rich in linguistic and cultural expressions. At the same time they are united in a common resolve to be a nation where every man, woman and child, where every family and group feel respected in their dignity and in their desire to develop their potential to the full. My affectionate greeting goes to all the people of Ghana, wherever they may be. I greet them in the cities and the villages. I greet the authorities and the elders, the fathers and the mothers, and in a special way the young people and the children. To all I say, I have come as your friend. I have come to be with the poor, to comfort the sick, to speak a word of encouragement and hope to those who are lonely, abandoned or in pain.

2. At the moment of my arrival, I wish also to express my special joy at the opportunity to meet the beloved sons and daughters of the Catholic church in Ghana. My warm greeting and blessing goes in the first place to my Brothers in the Episcopate, the zealous and faithful Pastors of the

People of God. To all the clergy, Ghanaian and from abroad, to the men and women religious, and to all the laity, I say: may the joy and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you on this day and always. I have come to you as Bishop of Rome and Successor of Peter, as a father and brother to rejoice with you in our common faith, hope and charity, and to celebrate with you the communion that unites us.

3. I gladly avail myself of this opportunity to express to you, Mr President, and to all the civil authorities, my deep appreciation for the esteem and understanding which you manifest towards the Catholic Church, and which you translate into an effective collaboration in the field of education, health care and the many sectors of human advancement. The Church will always be grateful for the freedom to carry out her mission, which is religious in nature. And because she is the servant of mankind, the Church will always be ready to cooperate in promoting justice, peace and human dignity through the active participation of her members in common efforts, and through her continuous proclamation that all human beings are created in the image and likeness of God and therefore endowed with equal dignity and rights.

At the beginning of my visit of friendships and of peace in Ghana, I invoke upon this land and its people abundant blessings from Almighty God.

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