



# The Holy See

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***ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II  
TO THE BISHOPS OF GHANA  
ON THEIR "AD LIMINA" VISIT***

*Thursday, 12 November 1981*

*Dear Brothers in Christ,*

1. Eighteen months have passed since we stood together on Ghanaian soil, celebrating the centenary of the implantation of the Church in your land. Those were days of joy for us as we perceived *the Holy Spirit in our midst*. In particular, in the Cathedral of Accra, dedicated to the Holy Spirit, we evoked his presence and his mission in the Church.

And today, we are once again keenly conscious of his presence, and we rejoice to celebrate his action in the Church. We praise the Holy Spirit for gathering us together in ecclesial communion as ministers of Christ, Bishops of his Church, men empowered to communicate by word and sacrament the life-giving message of the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

2. Indeed, the purpose of my visit to Ghana was to proclaim with you Jesus Christ and his Gospel.

It was my hope to give, by God's grace, a new impetus to evangelisation and to confirm you in your own mission as pastors of the flock. Our gathering here in Rome has the same aim. Together we are rededicating ourselves to the cause of the Gospel in fidelity to Christ, who instructed us to teach everything that he had commanded<sup>[1]</sup>. We are united in prayer with Mary, petitioning the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, so that we may *perpetuate Christ's own work of salvation*. Through the word of God and in the power of the Holy Spirit, we intend to continue to build up the community of the faithful, urging them to bear witness to Christ by their lives, and to fulfil their mission of fraternal service in the world.

3. Through the personal contact that I was privileged to have with the Church in your land, and

through your own reports, I know that the obstacles to evangelisation and catechesis are many. But we believe and are deeply convinced in *the power of Christ's grace in all areas of Christian living* – even in those that are most difficult.

Since my pastoral visit to Ghana, the whole Church has worked and prayed for the success of the Synod of Bishops on the family in the modern world. Within a short time I hope to publish a document that will place the insights of that assembly at the pastoral service of all the Bishops of the Church, so that they may ever more fittingly minister to Christian families. It is my hope that it will be of assistance to you, the Bishops of Ghana, in your arduous mission of proclaiming and upholding the design of God from the beginning for his people, as confirmed by Christ his Son.

4. Be assured that I am close to you in the fraternal support that you are called to give to your priests, as well as in the encouragement that you must offer to the Religious. I am confident that you will continue, with God's help, and with the collaboration of all sectors of your local Churches, to sustain *those great apostolic causes* that I earnestly endeavoured to promote, together with you, during my visit. In particular, I am thinking of the fostering of ecclesiastical vocations, the apostolate of the laity, the role of catechists and the constant enculturation of the Gospel message in the lives of God's people. In all the responsibilities incumbent on us in our sacred ministry, let us trust firmly in him "who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think"[2].

5. Over and above all these and other pressing concerns of our ministry, beyond the collegial discussions and planning that we are expected to engage in, beyond the individual pastoral issues that touch our local Churches and the universal Church in general, there is yet another matter. It is the question of our own personal love for Jesus Christ and our fidelity to the promptings of his Holy Spirit. It is the question of our conformity to Christ, Priest and Victim; in other words, it is *the question of our own holiness*. Let us not forget the words of Saint Paul; they can be applied immediately to us: "For this is the will of God, your sanctification"[3]. In God's plan, holiness is essential for all effective Church leadership; it is at the basis of all genuine pastoral concern and collegial activity. Yes, holiness is the great priority in our lives.

Permit me to recall words that I spoke to all of you that day in Kumasi: "...as Bishops let us call our people constantly to conversion of life, and by our example let us lead the way... as Bishops we are called to bear a consistent witness to Christ the High Priest and Pontiff of salvation by being signs of holiness in his Church. A difficult task? Yes, Brothers. But this is our vocation and the Holy Spirit is upon us. Moreover, the effectiveness of our pastoral ministry depends on our holiness of life. Let us not be afraid, for the Mother of Jesus is with us. She is in our midst today and always.

And we are strong through her prayers and safe in her care" (*9 May 1980*).

[1] Cfr. *Matth.* 28, 20.

[2] *Eph.* 3, 20.

[3] *1 Thess.* 4, 3.

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