



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC PILGRIMAGE TO NIGERIA, BENIN

GABON AND EQUATORIAL GUINEA

***ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
AT THE ARRIVAL IN AFRICA***

Lagos (Nigeria)

Saturday, 12 February 1982

*Mr President,
Your Eminence Cardinal Ekandem,
my brother bishops,
respected Government leaders,
esteemed dignitaries and all you people of Nigeria,*

I am happy to set foot on your beloved land. For a long time I have wanted to pay you this visit, and now this desire of my heart is being fulfilled. For me this is a moment of great joy; before me there unfolds a vision of hope.

1. I have come in order to meet people of different religious persuasions – both individuals and communities – and I earnestly hope that my presence among you will express the love and respect that I have for all of you, as well as my esteem for the worthy religious values that you cherish. I wish to show fraternal solidarity with all the people of this nation, who through their Constitution have firmly and solemnly resolved to live, under God, in unity and harmony, and to work for the welfare of all. It is my desire to pay tribute to Nigeria's contribution to justice, peace and development in Africa and beyond, and to support all efforts under way to build a society ever more fraternal and humane.

2. To the Catholics I say: I come to you in the name of Jesus Christ, on a visit that is pastoral in nature. I come to meet you, to listen to you, to celebrate the Holy Eucharist with you and for you. I come to proclaim Jesus Christ in your midst and to strengthen you in your faith and in your love for God and for all your brothers and sisters. I come to support my brother bishops and priests in the work of evangelization and in their generous service to humanity.

3. I address my words of friendship to all sectors of the national community. In particular my thoughts and affection go out to the sick, the old and the handicapped, and to all who are experiencing the burdens of suffering and sorrow. I hope to be able to be close to you, in order to comfort you. I look forward to the opportunity to encourage and challenge the youth, and to honour all the citizens of Nigeria. I am deeply grateful to you for inviting me to be your guest and I ask God to reward you for this warm reception. May God grant to all of us days of joyful encounter, celebration and prayer.

May the Almighty and Merciful God bestow on Nigeria every blessing of true prosperity and peace. God bless Nigeria!

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