



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II TO A GROUP OF PILGRIMS FROM NIGERIA

Friday, 18 February 1983

Dear brothers and sisters,

I am happy to greet all of you who have assembled this morning as representatives of the beloved people of Nigeria. In a special way I wish to welcome Archbishop Arinze, all my brother bishops, and all the religious and civil representatives.

A year ago, you warmly welcomed me to your country and honoured me with countless gestures of hospitality during my stay. Through the loving Providence of Almighty God, I had the great joy of being among you for several days - speaking with you, praying in union with you and coming to know you better. Now on this first anniversary of my pastoral visit, you have made the long journey to Rome, so that together we may be one in giving thanks to God our Father for the marvellous bond that so closely unites us in Christ Jesus. On my arrival in Nigeria I said that I had come as a friend and as a brother of all the inhabitants of your nation. Today I repeat those same sentiments, endeavouring by our meeting to show once again my love for you and for all Nigerians.

During my visit I spoke of the Church's gratitude for the sublime witness of your faith in Jesus Christ which has been demonstrated in various circumstances of your nation's history. But the achievements of the past, however sublime they may be, cannot blind us to the challenges of the present. In every age the Gospel must be preached anew in word and action. In this regard, I am well aware of the serious difficulties which so many people residing in your country experienced in recent weeks. Generous aid from public and private organisations throughout the world and from many individuals helped to relieve acute needs but so much more remains to be done. I express my heartfelt concern for those whose lives have been affected by this sad situation and I fervently pray that a just and effective solution will be found to help the people that are still suffering from the results of these events.

My dear friends, the Pope always close to you in his thoughts and in his prayer. It is the love of Jesus that makes us responsible for the welfare of our brothers and sisters and it is his grace within us that makes us ready to extend our hands to others. May the peace of Jesus fill your hearts and the hearts of all Nigerians this day and may you and your families be blessed with his strength for your Christian living.

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