



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT IN THE FIJI ISLANDS

WELCOME CEREMONY

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II

Suva (Fiji), 21 November 1986

Your Excellency the Governor-General,

Mr Prime Minister,

Distinguished Members of the Government,

My venerable brother Bishops,

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Dear People of Fiji, 1. I stand before you with sentiments of joy and profound gratitude to Almighty God for the privilege of being with you today in Fiji. To all of you I offer my heartfelt greetings of peace. My purpose in coming is in the first place religious. I have come as Pastor of the Catholic Church to confirm my brothers and sisters in their faith, but I also wish my visit to serve the spiritual good and progress of all the people of your nation. I am pleased to be able to admire the beauty of your homeland, and I thank you for your very hospitable welcome. As I see your faces, I acknowledge the greatness of our God who has created each one of you as a special reflection of his love. It is my earnest hope to speak to you about the mystery of God's love, and to ask you to respond to your great vocation of loving your neighbour as yourself. 2. I thank you, Your Excellency the Governor-General, for your kind words of welcome. I cordially reciprocate the expression of respect and esteem with which, on behalf of your people, you have welcomed me. Your words are a fitting confirmation of the friendly cooperation, dialogue and mutual understanding which have characterized diplomatic relations between Fiji and the Holy See from their beginning. I am also pleased to greet the Prime Minister and the members of the Government, the Diplomatic Corps represented here, and all the citizens of this country. In particular I offer cordial greetings to the representatives of the Church in Fiji, especially to Archbishop Petero Mataca of Suva, who is also President of the Episcopal Conference of the Pacific. With him I also greet all my brother bishops of the Pacific. I wish to express my deep affection and esteem for you and all the clergy, religious and laity of the Church in Fiji and the other islands of the Pacific. I wish to greet in the grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ all the members of the other Christian Communions represented here today. As you are no doubt aware, one of the major aims of my Pontificate is to work for the realization of the unity for which Jesus prayed at the Last Supper: "that they may all be one". I am pleased to acknowledge the contributions to evangelization in the Pacific that have been made by different Christian Communions. It

is my fervent hope that all the Christians of these islands will continue along the path towards full unity in faith in Christ. I also acknowledge with respect the presence here of other world religions. To their representatives I offer my cordial greetings and I assure them of my friendship.³ By coming to Fiji I hope to encourage all Christians here and throughout the Pacific to dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to the Lord, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. At the heart of the Gospel is the Lord's command of self-giving love. I trust that my visit will offer Christians an opportunity to dedicate themselves anew to obeying this commandment of love, especially through service and compassion for the less fortunate, the poor, the sick and all those in need. I shall speak about this again at the Mass later today.⁴ I am happy to acknowledge in a particular way the statement of warm welcome that was prepared by the Methodist Church in Fiji. I am deeply touched, dear brethren, by your demonstration of brotherhood. May my visit help to promote even greater understanding between all fellow Christians. May my visit help to spread the message of the Gospel.⁵ In a world of increasing challenges from secularization and materialism, I invite all my brothers and sisters in the Christian faith to respond with ever more intense love to the Lord's call to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. It is also my prayer that people of all religions and all people of good will renew their human solidarity in the cause of peace. On my part I invoke upon all the people of Fiji the blessings of full and lasting peace. Once more I thank you, Your Excellency, and all those who together with you have honoured me by their presence. *"May the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in all ways. The Lord be with you all"*. © Copyright 1986 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana