



The Holy See

VIAGGIO APOSTOLICO IN ZIMBABWE,
BOTSWANA, LESOTHO, SWAZILAND, MOZAMBICO

***DISCORSO DI GIOVANNI PAOLO II
DURANTE LA VISITA AL PRESIDENTE DELLA REPUBBLICA
DEL MOZAMBICO, JOAQUIM ALBERTO CHISSANO,
NEL «PALACIO DA PONTA VERMELHA» DI MAPUTO****

Maputo (Mozambico) - Venerdì, 16 settembre 1988

Your Excellency, Mr. President, Your Excellency, Mrs. Chissano, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. First of all I am grateful for the warm and respectful words of welcome that your President has just addressed to me, in his own name, in the name of the Government and that of all the people of Mozambique. I am grateful also for Your Excellency's presence and that of the highest authorities of the nation at the airport upon my arrival. It is with great joy that I come to Mozambique and visit this people, whose hospitality and cordiality were already known to me and which I now experience.

In the person of Your Excellency, I wish to greet affectionately all Mozambicans, from Rovuma to Maputo, especially the poor and those who suffer in body or soul.

I am here, Mr. President, upon your kind invitation and that of my brothers in the episcopate. I am grateful in a simple but sincere way: thank you very much!

2. I come to you as Bishop of Rome, as the Vicar of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, in whom every person is a brother or sister to be loved, respected and supported. Consequently, it is a pastoral visit, like those I have made to many other peoples, whom I love with, and in, the love of Christ.

My words and discourses will be addressed first of all to the faithful of the Catholic Church, in order to confirm and encourage them in their conscious commitment to live as children of God, engaged in this society. However, they are also directed to all Mozambicans without distinction, repeating the message: love exists; nobody can live well without love; the civilization of love is possible.

Rich in experience of humanity, the Church sees the person as her way. In the name of, and in fidelity to, Christ the Redeemer she wants to contribute to the full and authentic development of man here in Mozambique as well, as she has done, is doing and will continue to do in all the countries of the world, as long as she will be allowed. This contribution of hers is in favour of each and every person, for the Church thinks of every person as a value and of every community as a body; and that both must be liberated and never again oppressed. This same Church has as her motivation and constancy the divine «likeness» of man and his call to immortality (cf. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 29).

3. I am aware, Mr. President, having heard from Your Excellency during your visit to the Vatican in April of last year, and because of what my Special Envoy reported to me in August of that same year—as I had already heard from your distinguished late predecessor, President Samora Machel—that in Mozambique there is still war, with all of its consequences of suffering, death and destruction. Many men, women and children suffer from lack of housing, from malnutrition, inadequate schooling, ill-equipped hospitals, from the lack of churches where they can gather to pray and from the lack of arable soil where they can work. Many thousands of persons have been forced to flee in search of security and means of survival; many take refuge in neighbouring countries. In the face of these deplorable conditions, whenever there was an occasion, I have never failed to repeat: «No to violence! Yes to peace!». The efforts for peace made by my brother bishops of Mozambique can always count on my support.

I wish to express my best wishes that the deeply humanitarian perception, a distinct value of the African peoples, may be directed to give man everything that is due him, in such a way that the serious problems of today may be peacefully solved.

4. The special values of the Mozambican people include the esteem they have for the spiritual dimension of the human person. The Catholic Church, and other religious confessions as well, ascertain in the Mozambican person a vast and deep openness to the Transcendent; a vital need to believe; an ability to govern his moral behaviour and to lead his life according to universal ethical values. It is a feature that has sustained him through intense hardships.

I was told that many Christians, well-rooted in their faith, have given unmistakable evidence of their constancy in the faith and their dedication to the common good; and that many others, men and women, by obeying the dictates of their consciences according to what they believe, have shown an authentic heroism in righteousness of life and in fraternal solidarity.

5. The recorded history of Mozambique is closely united to the Church's presence. In spite of limitations, she has desired and desires to contribute to the development of this history. By her nature the Church respects institutions and authorities (cf. 1 Pt 2:13). She does not aspire to interfere in temporal matters, nor does she claim to take the place of a certain policy. Her specific contribution is always that of strengthening the spiritual and moral bases of a society; it is a service that aims at providing awareness and formation, by explaining and pointing out the ethical imperatives and, if necessary, denouncing the deviations from, and the attacks on, human dignity.

6. The Church's mission, however, is not confined to, nor can it be contained in, a human project of temporal well-being and happiness. Her essential and most important service is to preach the Gospel: a commitment to liberation from sin in all its forms, both individual and collective, in order to enter into communion with God in Jesus Christ. She acknowledges as her duty to favour the legitimate aspirations of peace and justice; to be a sign of reconciliation and love against all types of hatred; to act, in her sphere, as the leaven of communion against all forms of division; to promote a civilization of love, which is alien to all kinds of discrimination allegedly based on political, philosophical or religious convictions, on imbalance of wealth and power, or on colour and race. Her law is to love as Christ did, which she strives to observe in the certainty that only love builds.

The Church's position does not allow her to be ignorant of conditions that surround her. Nothing of what is human can be alien to her. Nevertheless, she does not propose a political, economic or social model, nor does she follow a «third way» between the contrasting systems, none of which correspond fully to the personal dignity of man or to the dispositions and the culture of a people (cf. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 41). Because of this she does not feel alien anywhere; nor is she so to the beloved people of Mozambique.

7. The Church's presence and her activity in a certain society are never a cooperation or assistance that comes «from outside». Rather she strives to promote «from within» the participation of the people themselves and their energies, in a communion of goals, in the search for the common good. Even when other resources arrive with personnel and means to strengthen the insufficient capacities of the local Churches, it is always an activity that develops from her own members and is never a superimposition or a substitution. The Church in Mozambique still needs priests and religious from other countries to reinforce the small number of Mozambicans fully dedicated to the specific works of evangelization. There is also the need to receive material help from Christians of other nations in order to provide services that lead to promotion, development and assistance, which the Catholic communities alone are not yet able to bring about in favour of the common good. However, it is always the one and unique Church that acts locally.

Here, as everywhere, the Church is present in the society by means of her organizations but above all through her faithful. These, engaged in the life of society and moved by the principles of Christian faith and love, commit their own lives to the building up of society. Thus, the

responsibility of Christians is enormous – in this moment I am thinking of the Catholic laity—in consolidating and raising the moral level and the social life of their fellow citizens. In effect they are the bearers, through their example and their actions, of the power of the Gospel that is destined to imbue «the criteria of judgment, determining values, points of interest. Lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life which are in contrast to a person's true good and God's plan of salvation (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 19).

8. There are also those who consecrate themselves entirely to the service of the Church: priests, religious and other consecrated persons. They desire to meet the demands of the concrete situations, as they are in Mozambique today, and they are conscious that between evangelization and human development, between correctly understood freedom and development there are deep bonds, not only of a theological but also of an anthropological nature.

In effect, the person to be evangelized and to be supported in the line of development is not an abstract being: he is a concrete person. How could one give witness and preach to him the «new commandment» without promoting, through the paths of peace and justice, his authentic progress? (cf. *Apost. Exhort. Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 31) .

Thus, both those who have left their countries of origin, «leaving everything» they cherish most (cf. *Mk 10:28*) in order to give themselves to this people, and those who in ever increasing numbers from among the Mozambicans, consecrate themselves to God and to the service of their brothers and sisters, are willing to help: not only in the field of health, education, shelter for children and the elderly, advancement of women and assistance to the suffering, but also on a plane of humanization, cultural elevation and affirmation of ethical values, by taking on whatever is good in the heritage of the local culture. In order to work so generously in favour of and with all, the religious and missionary personnel need room for freedom.

9. I wish to express here my satisfaction for the ever broader and deeper dialogue that exists between the national authorities and the authorities of the Catholic Church; it is already a comforting and hopeful sign of joint endeavour to save all who suffer physically or morally. This dialogue will result in some satisfaction of the legitimate aspirations and expectations of all Mozambicans, I am sure. Besides, peace, promotion of rights and development of the values of the human person are the aim that all, believers and people of good will, are called to pursue, with a converging participation, respectful of the diversities and as much as possible fraternally.

It is urgent that all embrace above all the cause of man and that all walk in the path of love of neighbour and of respect for everything that this implies both in the material and the spiritual aspects. All who suffer yearn for it; but it will be for the good of everyone where there is no more mourning of orphans, wandering of homeless women, solitude of the elderly who have no children to support them at the end of their lives. For it is time that divisions end, as well as the coldness and hatred in the hearts of men, so that there will be no more violence, and the instruments of war

and death will be turned into means of peace and life.

10. History is not a mere result of fate; it is something dependent on human decisions also. The history of this age will be marked by what we – the Church, social power and international communities – do or fail to do for peace and development in Mozambique. Now, the Church, here as everywhere, is ready to face up to today's challenges and to cooperate with all those who choose the ways of peace, whose new name is development, not only economic but also social, cultural and spiritual. Man and society are not satisfied with nourishing the body; they also need to nourish the soul. This is more demanding than one might think, for it supposes tenderness of love and respect for the other.

It is, therefore, a message of hope and at the same time an exhortation which I now address to all the people of Mozambique, through Your Excellency, the President, and your direct collaborators, who are faced with a difficult task, but an important and beautiful one. These are also the wishes of a religious man, a servant of Jesus Christ, who comes to meet you as a friend: I wish you peace, progress and prosperity!

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