



The Holy See

PASTORAL JOURNEY
TO MADAGASCAR, LA RÉUNION,
ZAMBIA AND MALAWI

WELCOME CEREMONY IN ZAMBIA

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

*International Airport of Lusaka
Tuesday, 2 May 1989*

*Mr President,
Distinguished Members of the Government of Zambia,
My Brother Bishops,
Brothers and Sisters in Christ,
Dear Friends,*

1. By God's grace I have the joy of standing on Zambian soil and greeting each one of you – a greeting which I extend to all the people of Zambia. I thank you for coming to meet me at the beginning of my pastoral visit. Already I sense the hospitality for which Zambians are well known. I feel *I am among friends*. And I wish you to know that I come among you as a friend, a friend of Africa, a friend of Zambia. May these days of my visit strengthen the already close bonds of friendship between us.

I have for a long time wished to come to Zambia! I thank Your Excellency President Kaunda for your oft-repeated invitation, and I am happy that in this way I can return the visits which you have made to the Vatican.

My deep gratitude goes also to the Catholic bishops of Zambia who have invited me to visit them and their people at the beginning of the celebrations marking the centenary of the Catholic Church

in this country.

2. Zambia is a young nation with a young population – a country which *twenty-five years ago achieved its independence* in a peaceful way. Many of you remember those historic days of 1964. Rightly, you cherish your independence and freedom, and you are engaged in the great task of building Zambia into a united, harmonious and just society, a true home for all its people.

I wish to express my encouragement to the Government and all the citizens of Zambia in your efforts to make this land a place of authentic freedom, brotherhood and mutual solidarity – a nation where your children can grow up and live in dignity and in the freedom worthy of the children of God.

3. In coming to your country as the Successor of the Apostle Peter, I look upon my visit as a time of *intense spiritual communion with the Zambian Catholic community*. I wish to pray with my brothers and sisters in the faith. I will seek to confirm them in the hope that is ours in the Lord Jesus Christ. I shall endeavour to speak the message of God's infinite love for them and for all people without distinction.

I am pleased that the bishops have chosen as the theme for the centenary celebrations of the Church's presence here: "Growing together in Christ our Hope, as truly African Christians". In this way the celebration will remind us of the past in order to gather our energies for the future, a future which is filled with hope. The centenary brings to mind one of the first missionaries, famous for his faith and zeal, *Father Joseph Dupont*, and his *White Father* companions who arrived here in 1891. The Church is grateful to God for the men and women who have served here since then, bearing witness to Christ's message of love and reconciliation. The vitality of the Church in Zambia today is the sign that they were indeed God's fellow workers, and through their labours you have become God's field, God's building (Cfr. *1Cor. 3, 9*).

4. I greet the leaders and representatives of the *other Christian Churches and Ecclesial Communities* who are graciously here to welcome me. I have come to join all Christians in praising God for the growth of faith, hope and love in so many hearts since the Good News was first proclaimed here. I look forward to celebrating with you the common faith we share through God's love which has been poured forth into our hearts through the Holy Spirit (Cfr. *Rom. 5, 5*). May this be a time of openness to the mystery of God's will for the Church and people of Zambia.

To the followers of *other religious traditions* and to all people of good will I extend the hand of friendship and peace. I thank all of you for your welcome.

5. My dear friends: at the beginning of this pastoral visit, I implore God's abundant gifts on Zambia. I am aware that events in this region in recent years, and world events beyond your control which affect all developing countries, have brought economic and social difficulties in their wake. *You are*

being challenged not to lose trust in the ideals which inspire your public policies and which consist in recognizing the equal dignity of all human beings without discrimination based on tribe, race, colour or creed. The difficulties of the present must not lead to a lessening of your commitment to protect and promote each individual's rights.

As a leading country in Africa, you are being strongly challenged to build a society of harmonious relations between people of every racial group. This, and your continuing efforts to promote a constructive dialogue by the parties involved, must be your response to the unacceptable system of *apartheid*. *Racism stands condemned, but it is not enough to condemn. Conditions must be fostered which enable fear to be banished and reconciliation to be achieved.* And since people from other parts of Africa are being forced to flee their homelands because of hunger or conflict, you are being *challenged to a great effort of solidarity* with the many refugees who have knocked at your door for food and shelter. While you offer them generous hospitality, I trust that you will not be left alone in the task of caring for them, and that the international community will give the needed assistance to these suffering peoples.

6. Mr President, dear friends: the Church and the State are different in their nature and purpose, but they serve the same people. In their commitment to defending *the natural dignity of every man, woman and child created in God's image*, the Church and State in Zambia share a wide range of concerns and effectively collaborate for the common good. Mr President, I am aware that on many occasions you have publicly expressed your appreciation of the contribution which the Church in this country is making to the advancement of the Zambian people, especially in the field of education, health care and human development. This, together with the existence of friendly relations between your nation and the Holy See, is a source of great satisfaction. Today, in Lusaka, I express my gratitude for this state of affairs.

Mr President, may God continue to bless you and your collaborators.

My prayer today is that the Lord will fulfil for Zambia what he promises in the words of the Psalm:

*"I will greatly bless her produce
I will fill her poor with bread.
I will clothe her priests with salvation
and her people shall ring out their joy" (Ps. 131, 15-16).*
May God abundantly bless Zambia!