



# The Holy See

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APOSTOLIC JOURNEY  
TO MADAGASCAR, LA RÉUNION,  
ZAMBIA AND MALAWI

MEETING WITH THE MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS  
ACCREDITED TO THE GOVERNMENT OF ZAMBIA\*

*ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II*

*Mulungushi Congress Hall, Lusaka  
Wednesday, 3 May 1989*

*Your Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

1. I am very happy to have this occasion to meet the *distinguished Heads of Mission and Diplomatic Personnel* accredited to the Government of Zambia. Through you I greet each of the nations and peoples you represent. I also extend greetings to the representatives of *International Organizations*. You are all working for the well-being and peaceful progress of peoples, conscious of the fact that true peace and development must be based on good will, justice and cooperation in international relations. Yours is a demanding task, and one which requires much dedication and sensitivity. I express my esteem and encouragement for you in your service in this part of Africa.

2. As you realize, my present visit is above all *a visit of the Bishop of Rome, the Successor of the Apostle Peter, to the Catholic communities* of Zambia, Malawi, Madagascar and La Réunion. At the same time, my visits to different countries allow me to manifest the *Holy See's profound solidarity with the peoples of the world* as they work for the realization of their destiny. With unflinching respect for the aspirations of all peoples to live their identity in freedom and security, with deep concern for the way in which human dignity and human rights are respected and promoted, the Holy See is present in the international community – not as a political, economic or military

power – but as seeking especially to foster *a moral and ethical reflection and dialogue* on the great questions and problems affecting the lives of the men and women of our time.

The person – in the fullness of human dignity – is the object of the Church’s mission and responsibility. The Holy See is convinced that only a higher perspective of moral ideals and of the principles of goodness, truth and justice in human relations can solve the complicated questions affecting the world community. The integral development and wellbeing of individuals, and of all peoples, must more and more become the objective which public authorities, governments and international organizations pursue, if the world is to overcome the tensions and conflicts which continue to threaten peace. In the words of my predecessor Pope Paul VI: “ Development is the new name for peace” (Pauli VI *Populorum Progressio*, 87).

3. The Holy See has consistently called for moral and ethical reflection on the grave problems affecting society, problems which require closer cooperation between developed and developing nations, between North and South, East and West. I wish to refer briefly to the subjects of two recent statements: one on racism and the other on the international debt question.

*Racism* and its expression in systems of social economic and political discrimination are considered by the Church as clearly *contrary to Christian faith and love*. Unfortunately, racism’s theoretical and practical manifestations continue to exist in the world on a vast scale, in many forms and degrees, even though the system of apartheid is a most obvious and dramatic instance. In combatting this moral problem, the Church advocates needed change, but a constructive change brought about by peaceful means. Discrimination must be overcome, not through fresh violence but through *reconciliation*.

It is my frequent and earnest prayer that Almighty God will inspire all concerned to understand that the basis of a genuine solution to racism in general and apartheid in particular is the conviction of *the equal dignity of every human being as a member of the human family and a child of God*.

4. The problem of *international debt* is a clear example of *the interdependence which characterizes relations between countries and continents*. It is a problem which cannot be solved without mutual understanding and agreement between debtor and creditor nations, without sensitivity to the real circumstances of indebted nations on the part of creditor agencies, and without a wise and committed policy of growth on the part of the developing nations themselves. It is merely a rhetorical question to ask *how many infants and children die every day in Africa because resources are now being swallowed up in debt repayment?* There is no time now to lament policies of the past or those elements in the international financial and economic picture which have led to the present situation. Now is the time for a new and courageous *international solidarity*, a solidarity not based on self-interest but inspired and guided by a true concern for human beings.

Recent moves on the part of the developed and creditor countries to lessen the burdens of repayment on the economies of debtor nations are obviously a step in the right direction. Such moves deserve to be encouraged. But much more remains to be done. It is to the ethical and moral values involved that the Church primarily directs her attention. *Her appeal is to the conscience and the heart* of those who can bring about a just solution to the problem, in respect for the equal dignity of all people. It is her task, in obedience to the Gospel, always and everywhere, to emphasize justice, reconciliation and love. It has become more and more evident that measures of solidarity are imperative so that hope may be restored to many sorely tried peoples.

I pray that those in a position to influence events will truly express that solidarity in a new and generous approach to the problems of the international debt.

5. In this distinguished gathering, I cannot but make reference to the tragic situation being experienced in Africa and elsewhere by millions of human beings forced to flee their homes and native lands because of famine, war and terrorism. We must heed the sufferings of these brothers and sisters. There are so many men and women offended in their inalienable human dignity, injured in body and mind, condemned to a miserable existence through no fault of their own.

As I have so often stated, *the plight of millions of refugees* in different continents is a festering wound which typifies and reveals the imbalances and conflicts of the modern world (Cfr. Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 24).

I wish to take this opportunity to express *appreciation to the Governments of the two countries* of continental Africa that I am visiting for what they are doing to offer hospitality to and meet the needs of the many refugees residing in their territories. Zambia is giving an example of openness and solidarity which honours its leaders and its people. Malawi is deeply affected by a large influx of refugees from neighbouring Mozambique, and is to be commended for its heroic efforts in caring for them, even to the point of diminishing its own essential resources. I would appeal to you as diplomats to see this tragedy not in political terms alone but as a deeply human drama to which you draw the attention and seek the assistance of your own peoples and of the organizations you represent. The care of refugees includes not only meeting their immediate needs, but also helping them *preserve their social, cultural and religious identity*. For it is precisely this identity which sustains them in their plight and offers them hope for a new and better future.

6. In recent months there have been signs of *progress towards peace and reconciliation in Southern Africa*. Lusaka itself has been a centre for both official and unofficial meetings of the parties involved in conflicts. Specifically, the world looks with expectation and hope to the steps being taken to implement the New York Accords leading to the *independence of Namibia* and the *withdrawal of foreign forces from Angola*. It is important that these processes should be promoted and further strengthened through the support of the international community.

Here again we see proof of the interdependence of the world's nations. To all those who hear my voice I make an appeal that Namibia, the latest country in Africa to become independent, be fully accepted into the family of nations, that it be sustained in its independence and given every assistance on the road to economic, social and political autonomy.

*International solidarity* calls for the abandonment of policies which are selfish or inspired by interests that are too partisan. True statesmanship implies a realistic and worldwide view of the paths that the human family is taking in its search for a better and more dignified existence.

Essential to humanity's progress is the conviction that differences and tensions should be resolved not by force or the threat of force, but through sincere and peaceful methods. In this the diplomatic community has a most immediate role to play.

7. Dear friends: for those who believe in divine Providence and God's loving plan for the human family, *the hope of peace and progress becomes an ardent prayer*, rising from the depths of our hearts, where we feel ourselves bound to every other human being in brotherhood and solidarity.

"The Lord bless you and keep you:

The Lord make his face to shine upon you,

and be gracious to you:

The Lord set his gaze upon you, and give you peace (*Nu.* 6, 24-26).

May God bless each one of you and your families. May he pour out his gifts upon the countries and peoples you represent. May he love and protect the people of Zambia, our gracious hosts and friends.

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\*AAS 81 (1989), p. 1248-1252. *Insegnamenti XII*, 1 pp. 1108-1113. *L'Osservatore Romano* 5.5. 1989 p. XXV. *L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English* n.22 pp.10,11.