



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY
TO MADAGASCAR, LA RÉUNION,
ZAMBIA AND MALAWI

MEETING WITH THE REPRESENTATIVES
OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCHES
AND ECCLESIAL COMMUNITIES OF ZAMBIA

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

Anglican Cathedral of Lusaka

Thursday, 4 May 1989

“Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (*Gal.* 1, 3).

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. I am most grateful for the warm welcome you have given me and for the kind words of your spokesman, Bishop Mumba. It is a deep the *representatives of the Christian Churches and Ecclesial Communities of Zambia*.

The Lord Jesus Christ himself has brought us together in the love of God and in the hope which we share because of the Holy Spirit who has been poured forth into our hearts at the moment of our *Baptism* (Cfr. *Rom.* 5, 5). *We must* not lose sight of the great importance of the ecclesial elements which unite us in spite of the real divisions which still keep us apart.

2. In his priestly prayer, as we have just heard from the Gospel of Saint John, Jesus intensely prayed to his Father: “May they be one, just as, Father, you are in me and I am in you, so that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe it was you who sent me” (*Jo.* 17, 21). Our prayer together this morning is not only our plea in response to Christ’s prayer, but it is also a realization

of the amazing truth which Jesus expressed when he said: "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them" (*Matth.* 18, 20). Conscious therefore of his presence among us, *our hearts joyfully proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord! To him be "blessing and honour and glory and might for ever and ever!"* (*Apoc.* 5, 13).

Christ's prayer to the Father at the Last Supper is an invitation to pray together for unity. It is in prayer that Jesus' prayer for unity – "I pray that they may be one in us" (*Io.* 17, 21) – takes on a deeper significance for us as the Spirit leads us into all truth. It is in prayer that we are drawn together in such a way that *our Christian identity, our conformity with Christ*, can become stronger than all the divisions which history has left to us and which still keep us apart.

3. When we meditate on Christ's priestly prayer we realize that we do indeed share a common task: *to proclaim Christ to the world so that the world may believe*. But we realize at the same time that the credibility of the Gospel message and of Christ himself is linked to the question of Christian unity (Cfr. *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 1). If we cannot at this point agree on all matters, we can and must avoid all forms of competition and rivalry. This is especially true here in Africa, where community and unity have been foremost traditional values. *Africa fervently yearns to hear the proclamation of God's love and the hope which is ours in Jesus Christ*. Zambia longs to hear the Good News of redemption. Your presence here this morning is a manifest sign of your earnest desire to offer the common witness of God's love to the people of your country, a people who genuinely hunger and thirst for God. Sincere and generous ecumenical collaboration is necessary in order to respond to their spiritual longing.

4. It is encouraging to note the many important ways in which the Christian Churches and Ecclesial Communions in Zambia are collaborating in the fields of health care, education and development. A great combined effort has continued in translating the Bible into local languages. These undertakings themselves are *an education in Christian unity*. They help to highlight the points of union and foster the desire to overcome the areas of disagreement. As stated by the Second Vatican Council, "cooperation among all Christians vividly expresses that bond which already unites them, and it sets in clearer relief the features of Christ the Servant" (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 12). Yes, ecumenical collaboration springs from an interior grace, given by the Father in answer to the prayer of Jesus (Cfr. *Io.* 17, 21) and the pleading of the Holy Spirit in us (Cfr. *Rom.* 8, 26-27). True ecumenism flourishes where there is *a genuine spirit of fraternal service* after the example of our Lord and Saviour, who came not to be served but to serve (Cfr. *Matth.* 20, 28).

Joint ecumenical action must find a place in the field of each community. It entails historical and theological study and discussion, but also mutual support in daily living (Cfr. *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 5). On many occasions I have repeated that the Catholic Church is fully committed to ecumenical collaboration. The Catholic Church in Zambia has my prayerful support and encouragement in seeking increasingly good relations with all those who are genuinely concerned about unity. At the

same time we are all painfully aware that *the absence of full communion between Churches and Ecclesial Communities* and the differences that exist in teaching regarding both faith and morals set limits on what Christians are able to do together.

And even as you try to bear common witness to the Christian message, present divisions are sometimes made even more complicated by *the current phenomenon of the multiplication of independent communities*. This, together with new religious movements, can be a source of confusion for many, especially among the young. In this area, too, ecumenical collaboration can have good results.

5. In a moment we shall recite together *the very prayer which Jesus taught his disciples*. We shall pray that the will of our common Father in heaven be done on earth as it is in heaven. We shall pray for the coming of God's kingdom, a kingdom of peace, justice and love, of which "Jesus Christ is the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, the ruler... who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom" (*Apoc. 1, 5-6*). We shall pray for our daily bread, for the needs of all our brothers and sisters, for the needs of the people of Zambia. We shall pray for the forgiveness of our sins and for the strength to be able to forgive all those who have in any way hurt us – *to forgive and be forgiven for the sin of division among Christians*. Finally, we shall pray not to be tested beyond our strength, and to be freed from the evil which works against the grace of God in our hearts.

6. Dear friends: with full trust in the hour of God's favour, we must be confident that the ecumenical collaboration which has characterized your relationship with each other so far will bear abundant fruit. In the words of Saint Paul: "I am sure that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" (*Phil. 1, 6*).

That "day" calls upon us here and now to renew the intention and commitment of our Churches and Ecclesial Communities to work together for the cause of Christian unity. May *the sign of peace* which we give one another in this Anglican Cathedral of the Holy Cross in Lusaka be a symbol of our determination to treat each other "with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (*Eph. 4, 2-3*).

May the God of Peace be with you all. Amen.