



# The Holy See

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APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO TANZANIA, BURUNDI,  
RWANDA, AND THE IVORY COAST

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II  
TO PRIESTS AND RELIGIOUS OF TANZANIA**

*St Peter's Church, Dar-es-Salaam  
Sunday, 2 September 1990*

Askofu Mkuu Polycarp Pengo,  
(*Dear Archbishop Polycarp Pengo*),  
Ndugu zangu Mapadre na Watawa,  
(*Dear Priests and Religious*),  
Tumsifu Yesu Kristu!

(*Praised be Jesus Christ*)!1. Mimi niliye Halifa wa Mtume Petro, ambaye Bwana alimkabidhi wajibu wa kuwaimarisha ndugu zake katika Imani, ninapenda kumshukuru Baba Yetu wa Mbinguni kwa ajili ya fursa hii ya kuwa nanyi *Mapadre na Watawa mliomo nchini Tanzania*. Ninawashukuru nyote mliomba ili-kwa kunukuru maneno ya Mtakatifu Paulo— "nipate kufika kwenu kwa furaha, kama appendavyo Mungu, nikapate kupumzika pamoja nanyi". Ninapenda kumsalimu kila mmoja wenu na kuwahakikishia nyote kuwa nipo daima pamoja nanyi katika sala zangu nikiwaombea ili maisha na huduma mnazozitoa zifanikiwe. (*As the Successor of Peter, the Apostle to whom the Lord entrusted the task of strengthening his brethren in faith (Cfr. Luc. 22, 32), I give thanks to our heavenly Father for this meeting with you, the priests and religious of Tanzania. I am grateful to all who prayed so that - in the words of Saint Paul - "by God's will I might come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company" (Rom. 15, 32). My great desire is to greet each one of you personally and to assure you of my prayerful closeness to your life and ministry*). We are joined together by no less a bond than the divine love which the Holy Spirit has poured into our hearts (Cfr. *ibid.* 5, 5), a love which has taken form in the singular and specific vocation given to each one of us in the Body of Christ. Even when we are geographically separated and far from each other, we are nevertheless intimately united in Christ Jesus. In the communion that is the Church I wish to encourage you - as well as all of Tanzania's priests and religious - in your clear witness to the Gospel and your devoted service to the People of God. Through your fidelity the ecclesial

community in Tanzania is being built up in unity, holiness and truth. I thank *Archbishop Pengo* for his words of welcome, and *Father Itatiro*, whose description of the expansion of the Church in this land invites us to praise God who is the Author of this growth (Cfr. *1 Cor.* 3, 6-7). The Catholic community in Tanzania owes much to the sacrifices and often heroic labours of *the Holy Spirit Missionaries, the White Fathers, the Benedictines of Saint Ottilien and many other missionaries* from various countries who first preached the Gospel in this region, and I greet the members of these Congregations who are present. Through God's grace, the apostolate begun by those pioneers is being continued by their successors and by increasing numbers of *indigenous priests and religious Sisters and Brothers*. By working closely together in that spirit of mutual acceptance and cooperation of which Archbishop Pengo spoke, you show that the Church in Tanzania is both truly Catholic and truly African. Indeed, if you are to be genuine witnesses of Christ to the world, it must be apparent to all that "you stand firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the Gospel" (*Phil.* 1, 27).

2. The rapid growth of the Church in Tanzania is a pressing invitation to consider the most effective ways of building upon the foundation which you have inherited. The *continuing evangelization of Africa* is, as you know, a priority for the Church and has been chosen as the theme of the forthcoming Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops. Evangelization belongs to the essence of the Church's life. Thus, pastoral action can never be a matter of simply maintaining what has already been achieved. The word of God cannot be fettered (Cfr. *2 Tim.* 2, 9). In this perspective, my message to you today takes the form of an ardent appeal: *Muwe na imani katika wito mlioupokea kutoka kwa Bwana; na mwendelelee kujitoa zaidi kwa ajili ya utume anaowakabidhi.* (*Be confident in the vocation you have received from the Lord; and be ever more committed to the mission which he entrusts to you!*) Dear brothers and sisters: your vocation in the Church is a unique and precious treasure. As *priests* you have been configured to Jesus the High Priest in the Sacrament of Holy Orders; as *religious* you are committed to living and bearing witness to the "new life" of Christ's kingdom through the observance of the evangelical counsels. In every case *your life and work within the ecclesial community take their meaning and significance from your relationship with the Saviour*. You have not chosen Him; rather, He has chosen you to go forth and bear fruit (Cfr. *Jo.* 15, 16). If you love Him and serve Him faithfully, it is because He has loved you first (Cfr. *1 Jo.* 4, 9). Your only boast should be the mercy He has shown you and the grace He has given you (Cfr. *1 Cor.* 4, 7). He Himself, therefore, is the infinite source of your security and of the hope which sustains you in every challenge and circumstance (Cfr. *2 Tim.* 1, 12). In fact, because of the special nature of your relationship with Christ, your every effort must be to reflect His love and zeal in your work and prayer. He is the "anointed" of the Father, the one "sent" by the Father, the first "apostle" (Cfr. *Luc.* 4, 18). His example is one of total dedication to the realization of the Father's plan of salvation: "I have come... not to do My own will, but to do the will of the one who sent Me" (*Jo.* 6, 38). You too must be *moved by a similar passion for the Father's will*, which you will then translate into an unflinching quest for holiness of life and a vivid sense of mission.

3. Your search for spiritual growth and for an increasing identification with the Church's mission necessarily passes through certain fundamental virtues and "signs". Your commitment to *celibacy and chastity* for the sake of the kingdom offers a powerful witness of *undivided love for Christ* and a readiness to serve Him in

others without distinction of persons. By your availability to all, you will "assure that no one will feel a stranger in the Christian community" (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 9). The virtue of *poverty*, which religious practice by reason of a specific vow, is of great relevance to the life of all priests, for you are ambassadors of *the Lord who lived poorly* and had a love of preference for the poor. Your personalities will be immensely enriched through the interior liberation that comes from a detachment from material things and from a renunciation of the "power" that comes from their possession. *Obedience rooted in the desire to imitate Christ, the obedient Son of the Father*, is also a vital aspect of your condition as priests or as religious. Indeed, "obedience is the hallmark of the servant of Christ, who redeemed the human race by His obedience" (*Ad Gentes*, 24). It is also a sign of humility and docility to God's will as it is manifested especially through those chosen to succeed the Apostles as "overseers, to care for the Church of God which He obtained with the blood of His own Son" (*Act. 20, 28*), and through those whom faith presents as God's representatives (Cfr. *Perfectae Caritatis*, 14). Since the priestly ministry and the apostolate in general may only be exercised in hierarchical communion, the good of the Church requires that all foster a sincere *unity of mind and action with their bishops*, with whom the priests constitute a single presbyterate in the service of each particular Church (Cfr. *Lumen Gentium*, 28), and to whom all religious are subject in what has to do with the care of souls (Cfr. *Christus Dominus*, 35).4. Dear brother priests, you have been made co-workers of the bishops and have been given a share in their apostolic mission to preach the Gospel to the ends of the earth (Cfr. *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 2). Since it is the word of God which first draws the Church into unity (*Ibid.* 4), your dedication to preaching and teaching that word in its integrity constitutes a major part of your ministry. As servants of the word, it is essential that *you yourselves first accept its purifying power into your hearts*, so that you may then share its saving truth with others. The good priest is the one who constantly renews his desire to bring all men and women to the knowledge of the mystery of Christ's measureless love for sinful humanity. In the celebration of the Eucharist, in frequent reception of, and ready availability to minister the Sacrament of Penance, in times dedicated to private prayer and the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours, and through the ministry in all its forms, you have the means to tend the fire of your zeal for the Father's house (Cfr. *Luc. 2, 49*). In all your activities may you feel the maternal company of Mary the Mother of the Redeemer. She will teach you to do all that her Son tells you (Cfr. *Io. 2, 5*).5. My words this evening would be incomplete if I did not mention the special role which, from the beginning of Tanzania's evangelization, *women religious* have played in a host of apostolates. And what can I say about Tanzania's Religious Brothers, who have contributed in no small way to the spreading of God's word through their labours in many fields, not least in teaching and communications? Dear Brothers and Sisters: Even more important than these apostolates is *the witness of your religious consecration*. The paradox of the Cross, whereby dying with Christ leads to new life in Him (Cfr. *Rom. 6, 3-4*), should be fully apparent in your way of living. May you always incarnate with joy those words of the Second Vatican Council regarding your consecration "the more ardently that (religious) unite themselves to Christ through a self-surrender involving their entire lives, the more vigorous will become the life of the Church and the more abundantly will her apostolate bear fruit" (*Perfectae Caritatis*, 1). Allow me to say a word of special appreciation and

gratitude to the *members of contemplative communities*, whose silent lives of prayer and penance are bearing rich fruit in the conversion of souls and bearing witness among Christians and non-Christians alike to the majesty and love of God, as well as to the brotherhood of all mankind in Christ. To your prayers and sacrifices in a special way I entrust the future of the Church in Tanzania and in Africa. This is an intention that is very close to my heart. Thank you for the oblation you make of yourselves. It ensures an outpouring of grace upon us all.<sup>6</sup> The great number of vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life in Tanzania bears eloquent witness to the *growing maturity of your young Churches*. It is heartening to know that the Church in Tanzania has begun to send forth her sons and daughters as *missionaries to other countries*. Having received so much from the dedicated missionary work of men and women of other nations, you are now beginning to give freely what you have so freely received (Cfr. *Matth.* 10, 8). Likewise, the spirit of cooperation and unity which exists between men and women of different racial and ethnic groups within your Institutes offers all Africa an example of the openness and universality which is so needed if certain negative aspects of tribalism are to be overcome. In a few moments, I shall bless the foundation stone of the new Salvatorian Senior Seminary in Morogoro. I ask all of you to join me in praying that "the Lord of the harvest" (*Luc.* 10, 2), will continue to raise up among you *many more vocations to the priesthood and the consecrated life*, and will never cease to confirm you in your dedicated service to the Church, for the glory of God and the salvation of all mankind. May He who began a good work in you bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ (Cfr. *Phil.* 1, 6). Amen. Asanteni sana.

(*Thank you*). Na Mungu awabariki.

(*God bless you*).