



The Holy See

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

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE SICK**

*Cathedral of Mwanza
Monday, 3 September 1990*

Askofu Mkuu Anthony Mayala,
(Dear Archbishop Anthony Mayala),
Ndugu zangu Maaskofu,
(Dear Brother Bishops),
Ndugu wapendwa katika Kristu,
(Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ)

1. Leo safari yangu ya kichungaji nchini Tanzania, imenifikisha hapa Mwanza. Ninawasalimu kwa moyo wote *ndugu zangu Maaskofu, hasa Askofu Mkuu Anthony Mayala*, na nikiwatolea salamu hizo, ninamshukuru Mungu Baba, Mwana na Roho Mtakatifu kwa fursa hii ya kukutana nanyi. Pia ninawasalimu kwa upendo mkuu katika Bwana mapadre, watawa na walei wa Jimbo Kuu la Mwanza na wa majimbo ya Kanda hii. Ninaomba neema na amani ya Mungu Baba Yetu na ya Bwana wetu Yesu Kristu vimshukie kila mmoja wenu.

(Today my pilgrimage to the Church in Tanzania brings me to Mwanza! As I offer cordial greetings to Archbishop Anthony Mayala and my Brother Bishops, I express my deep gratitude to the Most Holy Trinity for the gift of this encounter. With great affection in the Lord I greet the clergy, religious and laity of the Archdiocese of Mwanza and its Suffragan Sees. Upon each of you I cordially invoke the grace and peace of God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ [Cfr. Phil. 1,2]).

We are gathered in prayer in this Cathedral which is dedicated to the Lord's Epiphany. The star

which guided the wise men from the East to visit the Child Jesus (Cfr. *Matth.* 2, 1 ss.), was a sign that God wishes to lead the people of every time and place to salvation through His Son. In God's providence, *the Gospel of Jesus Christ was destined to come to the area of Lake Victoria over a century ago*, brought by a small but zealous band of White Fathers. This evening we join in thanking God that the seed which those early missionaries planted has grown and flourished. Aided by the apostolic labours of missionaries from many countries and of growing numbers of native priests and religious, and blessed with a generous and committed laity, you are witnessing the *growth of the Church* in the Archdiocese of Mwanza, and the Dioceses of Bukoba, Geita, Musoma, Rulenge and Shinyanga.

2. This evening, as I greet with particular affection *our elderly and infirm brothers and sisters from the Bugando Medical Center*, my thoughts turn to all those in Tanzania who are experiencing illness of mind or body.

Dear friends: In the Gospel which we have just heard, Saint Mark tells us that as Jesus passed by, people brought the sick before him on their stretchers so that they might touch him and be healed (Cfr. *Marc.* 6, 55-56). It is clear that *Jesus had a particular love for the sick*. How many times do we read in the Gospel that he was moved with pity at the sight of the sick and those who suffered (Cfr. *Marc.* 1, 41)! How many times did he reach out to touch them (Cfr. *Matth.* 20, 34)! How many times did he heal their illnesses and restore them to new hope by the forgiveness of their sins (Cfr. *Marc.* 2, 1-12)!

Jesus is still close to the sick! He is close to each of you in your sufferings. He is close to you when you are lonely and afraid and when you feel that no one understands your pain. And He is *especially close to the dying and those afflicted by incurable illnesses*. Jesus is with you because He too has experienced suffering. In the Garden of Gethsemane He knew fear and deep anxiety as He faced His supreme sacrifice (Cfr. *Matth.* 26, 38-39). His hands and side still bear the marks of His suffering and death (Cfr. *Jo.* 20, 20).

The Son of God became man and dwelt among us so that by sharing fully in our life— becoming like us in all things but sin (Cfr. *Hebr.* 4, 15). — He might redeem us from sin and its wages of death (Cfr. *Rom.* 6, 23). *Jesus did not flee from the mystery of human suffering*. Rather, He embraced suffering, and in His Passion, Death and Resurrection He opened to us the way of hope and everlasting glory. The paradox of the Cross is that *God's saving power has been made manifest in human suffering*; God's mighty strength has been revealed in human weakness; God's glory has been revealed in the broken body of His only Son.

3. Through Baptism, you were united to Jesus in the mystery of His death and His rising to new life (Cfr. *ibid.* 6, 5), and you were sent forth into the world to bear witness to His victory over sin and death. At every moment of your lives, Jesus wishes you *to deepen your union with Him in faith and love and to grow more and more in His likeness* (Cfr. *ibid.* 8, 29). Now, in your sickness, He is

asking you to reveal in your own bodies *the victorious power of His grace* and to proclaim to the world the "Gospel of suffering": the message that in Christ's Passion all human suffering has been redeemed and can become a witness to the hope and joy of the Resurrection (Cfr. Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Salvifici Doloris*, 26).

Do not be afraid to let Jesus use your illness as a special grace to draw you nearer to Him in an ever deeper *conversion of mind and heart*. Through your weakness, He will help you grow in wisdom, spiritual insight and understanding! Above all, be confident that in union with Christ, *your sufferings will bear rich spiritual fruit* for the good of the Church and of the entire world! Our prayers, our sufferings and the good we accomplish affect the entire Mystical Body of Christ and can produce good in ways we may never know. This is the mystery which led Saint Paul to exclaim: "It makes me happy to suffer for you, as I am suffering now, and in my own body to do what I can to make up all that has still to be undergone by Christ for the sake of His body, the Church" (*Col.* 1, 24).

4. Dear Brothers and Sisters: The Church proclaims her faith in Jesus Christ not only in her preaching and sacraments but *in the lives of her suffering members*. In your faithful witness to the power of the Cross, you are living proof that "neither death nor life, no angel no prince, nothing that exists, nothing still to come, not any power, or height or depth, nor any created thing, can ever come between us and the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus our Lord" (*Rom.* 8, 38-39)!

God's great love is also reflected in the actions of those who imitate Christ the Good Samaritan by their *service of their suffering brothers and sisters*. May you always approach your delicate task with kindness, competence, and selfless dedication. The sick need your care and assistance; but they also need to know that you esteem and respect them. They need to know that their illness, no matter how grave, does not diminish them in your eyes, but rather makes them more precious and closer to your hearts. I wish to thank those of you who assist the sick at Bugando Hospital and elsewhere in Tanzania, and I invoke upon you the blessings which our Lord promised to the merciful (Cfr. *Matth.* 5, 7). I commend all present here in this Cathedral to the prayers and motherly care of the *Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church*, who at the time of her greatest suffering was present at the foot of the Cross to comfort and console her dying Son. May she intercede for you and for all the beloved people of this Lake Region.

Ninatoa Baraka kwa kila mmoja wenu, nikiwaombea nguvu na amani katika Bwana wetu Yesu Kristu. Amina.

(To all of you I willingly impart my Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of strength and peace in the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen).

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