



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY
OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO JAMAICA, MEXICO AND DENVER (COLORADO)
(AUGUST 8-16, 1993)

WELCOME CEREMONY IN JAMAICA

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

*Norman Manley International Airport, Kingston
Monday, 9 August 1993*

*Your Excellency,
Mr Prime Minister,
My Brother Bishops,
Dear Jamaican Friends,*

1. I offer a fervent prayer of thanks to God who gives me the joy of visiting your beautiful "Island in the Sun", after having had to postpone the visit planned for last year. To all of you who have come here to welcome me with the warm hospitality characteristic of the Caribbean, I am truly grateful. I thank Your Excellency Governor-General Sir Howard Cooke for your kind words; both you and Prime Minister Patterson have been most gracious in renewing your invitation for me to come to Jamaica. I ask God to reward all who have worked to prepare this meeting between the Successor of Peter and the beloved Jamaican people.

With fraternal affection I greet Archbishop Samuel Carter and the whole Archdiocese of Kingston, Bishop Clarke and the faithful of Montego Bay, as well as Bishop Boyle and the faithful of the Vicariate Apostolic of Mandeville. I look forward to meeting the members of the Catholic community and to celebrating the Eucharist with them.

I extend the hand of friendship to the representatives of the other Christian Churches and Ecclesial Communities. Your presence here, and our meeting tomorrow at Holy Cross Church, are signs of the excellent ecumenical relations which have existed in Jamaica for many years.

2. As you know, my journey will take me to the World Youth Day which is being celebrated this year in Denver, in the United States. But my visits to Jamaica, and later to Merida in the Yucatan Peninsula, have a significance all their own. They fit into the broad perspective of *the year which marks the Five Hundredth Anniversary of Columbus' voyage to the New World*. Last year I went to Santo Domingo to join the representatives of the Latin American Episcopate, as well as other Bishops of this Continent, in commemorating *five centuries of evangelization*. The Church could not miss this appointment. She is obliged to give unbounded praise to God, who watches over the course of history, for the marvellous enterprise of the *first evangelization of the Americas*.

That was the beginning of the Church's presence in this part of the world, a presence made up of holiness of life and the witness of Christian charity on the part of many, but also of the faults and sins of others. In fact, last year Divine Providence also enabled me to visit Gorée in Senegal where there is a striking monument to the tragic enslavement of millions of African men, women and children, uprooted from their homes and separated from their loved ones to be sold as merchandise. The immensity of their suffering corresponds to the enormity of the crime committed against them: *the denial of their human dignity*. Gorée was the appropriate place to implore Heaven's forgiveness in the name of humanity, and to pray that human beings will learn to look at one another and respect one another as God's image, in order to love one another as sons and daughters of their common Father in Heaven (Cf. John Paul II, *Address to the Catholic Community of Gorée Island*, 3, 22 February 1992).

Now, here in Jamaica, I wish to remember the original Arawak people and your ancestors who were brought here from Africa. Let us pray that the wounds of past experiences will at last be healed and that everyone will work, with full respect for each person's dignity, for a future in which justice, peace and solidarity will leave no room for hatred or discrimination.

3. The immediate future of Jamaica is closely linked to the efforts being made throughout the Caribbean to increase regional unity. I pray that greater integration will help the peoples of these Island Nations to face the many challenges before them. The Church, for her part, looks favourably on everything that increases understanding and cooperation among countries. She is particularly close to the world's developing peoples. In fulfilling her religious mission she inspires and educates citizens who have the good of the whole of society at heart. By means of her social doctrine she "seeks to lead people to respond... to their vocation as responsible builders of earthly society" (John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 1). Through her educational and health-care institutions and her social works, she contributes to the well-being of the whole national community. I am aware that here in Jamaica there is effective cooperation between the State and the Church in these matters. I thank the Government for this, and encourage the members of the

Church in their service of the common good.

The beauty of these Islands, where the exuberant colours of nature speak so loudly of the glory of God, is matched by the kindness and goodness of their inhabitants. I would like to be able to meet every Jamaican, in a spirit of understanding and friendship. I assure you of my prayers and my esteem. May Almighty God abundantly bless the people of Jamaica, and all the peoples of the Caribbean. God's peace be with you all!