



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE NATIONAL PILGRIMAGE OF NIGERIA

29 June 1980

*Your Eminence,
Dear brother Bishops,
Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,*

Greetings in the peace and joy of our Lord Jesus Christ. I am very happy that you have come to Rome and I hope that your visit here will enrich your lives and deepen your faith.

As I welcome you today, it is as though I have before me a miniature reproduction of the Church in your beloved country. For you are made up of Bishops, priests, religious and laity, and you have come, on this great feast of Saints Peter and Paul, to express your unity with the Successor of Peter and your communion with the universal Church. As I greet you I also wish to extend my greeting to all the faithful in Nigeria. Please tell them that the Pope loves them and that he sends them his blessing in the love of the Risen Saviour.

You come today as pilgrims on a journey which also includes a visit to the Holy Land and to Lourdes. As pilgrims you are particularly attentive to everything you see and to everyone you meet. You carefully observe and take note, you pause and ponder, you listen to the message embodied in each person and place. As pilgrims of faith, you take time as well to meditate and pray - to enter more fully into the mystery of faith to which each of the shrines bears witness. As you visit each shrine, as you enter each Church, as you spend time in each city along the way, seek to discover the meaning which lies behind them, and to penetrate the vision of faith which gave rise to them. Open your hearts to the mystery of which each place speaks, to the mystery of the Redeemer who entered into human history.

The Church herself is like a pilgrim in a foreign land. She is a community of men and women who,

united in Christ and led by the Holy Spirit, are journeying to the Kingdom of the Father. In the midst of the world yet never fully at home there, enmeshed in history yet destined for eternal life, threatened by evil yet buoyed up by the consoling mercy of God, this community of believers goes forward day by day trusting in the providence of the Lord.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, we have the great privilege of belonging to this pilgrim people as it journeys through history towards a heavenly homeland. In this journey, we must never forget that we have a special mission to fulfil. For the Gospel we have received is intended for every man, woman and child on the face of the earth. To every citizen of our own country, to every person on our own continent, to the whole world, by our words and by our deeds and especially through the celebration of the Eucharist we proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes in glory.

May God watch over each of you and protect you during your pilgrimage, and may God bless every member of the Church in Nigeria.