



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE BISHOPS OF TANZANIA
ON THEIR "AD LIMINA" VISITA**

Friday, 4 December 1987

Dear Brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ,

1. I am pleased to welcome you, the members of the Episcopal Conference of Tanzania, on this occasion of your *ad limina* visit. Your presence today enables us to strengthen "the bonds of unity, charity and peace" (*Lumen Gentium*, 22) which we share in the Apostolic College. As "God's fellow workers" (1Cor. 3, 9) we are gathered here in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ near the tomb of the Apostle Peter. And just as Jesus chose Peter and the other Apostles, so too have we been chosen and ordained as their successors through the imposition of hands and the invocation of the Holy Spirit. Together with the Apostles we have inherited *the task of bearing witness to the Gospel of God's grace* (Cfr. Rom. 15, 16; Act. 20, 24) and to the ministration of the Spirit and of God's glorious power to make men just (Cfr. 2Cor. 3, 8-9) .

I appreciate the kind words which Cardinal Rugambwa has spoken in your name and on behalf of the People of God in Tanzania. Please help me to reciprocate by taking back to the faithful entrusted to you *my greetings of grace and peace*. Assure them of my prayerful remembrance.

It is *my fervent hope to be able to accept the kind invitation* to visit Tanzania in the not too distant future. My desire is to repeat the life-giving message of truth, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. To all who willingly listen to my voice I shall proclaim the Good News of salvation, so that the person of Christ and his Gospel may be ever better known and accepted. I also wish to see firsthand the faith of your people and their love for Christ and his Church. Just as the Apostle Paul wrote to the first Christians at Rome, I repeat to all the faithful in Tanzania: "I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you . . . , without ceasing I mention you always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you. For I long to see you, that I may impart

to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you, that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine" (*Rom. 1, 8-12*).

2. My dear Brothers: as pastors in Tanzania, know that in your labours for the sake of the Gospel *you are not alone*. You are supported by the Successor of Peter and the entire College of Bishops. I am aware of the pastoral concerns which you face each day, and I praise the many initiatives which you have undertaken. Thanks to the abundant graces bestowed by Almighty God on the Church in Tanzania, the power of the Gospel has taken firm root in the hearts of the faithful and enabled the Church to grow.

During the past five years you have witnessed *a rapid growth* of your local Churches from three and a half to over four and a half million members. A new Archdiocese and new Dioceses have been established, and there has been an increase in the number of clergy and men and women Religious. All of this growth has been accompanied by *a consolidation* of diocesan structures and apostolic works.

I am pleased *to encourage you and all* the priests, Religious, catechists and laity *who have laboured to bring about this expansion of the Kingdom of God* in Tanzania. As I stated at the time of your last *ad Limina* visit: "The criterion of your effective ministry – your effective episcopal ministry – is absolute fidelity to Jesus Christ and his word. It is up to us to plant and to water; God himself will give the increase and make the seed of his word grow in his own good time. He demands our trust, our obedience in preaching his message, our patience in awaiting the full harvest of salvation (Ioannis Pauli PP. II, *Ad quosdam Tanzaniae episcopos, occasione oblata «ad limina» visitationis coram admissos*, 6, die 9 oct. 1981: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II, IV/2* [1981] 380).

3. Following the recent meeting of the Synod of Bishops, I wish to stress that the work of evangelization is *the baptismal responsibility* of all those in your pastoral care. As the Second Vatican Council teaches, "the obligation of spreading the faith is imposed on every disciple of Christ, according to his ability" (*Lumen Gentium*, 17). Thus all *lay Christians*, specifically by virtue of Baptism, are called by the Lord to engage in an effective apostolate: "For by its very nature the Christian vocation is also a vocation to the apostolate" (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 2).

While expressing my gratitude to all the priests and missionaries working in Tanzania, I also wish to encourage the laity to be true witnesses to Christ, builders of the Christian community, helping to transform the world with Gospel values. The *witness of an exemplary Christian life* is already an act of evangelization. I hasten to add that the witness of Christian living through example is not enough in itself. It has to be preceded and accompanied by the proclamation of the Good News of salvation in Christ, which is at the heart of all the Church's action of evangelization. And both these essential elements must be sustained by prayer and sacrifice.

4. In a society such as yours where a great part of the population belongs to traditional African religions, I praise the *many lay catechists*, men and women, who are making *an important contribution to the proclamation of the Gospel*. They are direct witnesses to the faith and your active collaborators in establishing, developing and increasing the practice of Christian life. I am confident that they will always find the assistance they need, and that they will be given a continuing formation, suited to the needs of the communities which they serve. Catechists have an indispensable role in the whole process of evangelization. They are involved *in developing the initial faith of your people* and in bringing them to the fullness of Christian life (cf. Ioannis Pauli PP. II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, 18). While striving in an organic and systematic way to initiate their hearers into the fullness of Christian life, catechists need to make the Gospel incarnate in the lives and culture of your people. Indeed, one of the priorities of your ministry is *the consolidation and transformation of your culture in accordance with the Gospel*. "The 'acculturation' or 'inculturation' which you rightly promote will truly be a reflection of the Incarnation of the Word, when a culture, transformed and regenerated by the Gospel, brings forth from its own living tradition original expressions of Christian life, celebration and thought (Cfr. *ibid.* 53)" (Ioannis Pauli PP. II, *Allocutio ad Kenianos episcopos, in Apostolicae Nuntiaturae sacello congregatos, habita*, 6, die 7 maii 1980: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, III/1 [1980] 1223).

Dear Brothers: I am well aware that you are called to bear daily witness to Christ in a country where Christians and Muslims live side by side. As you know, the Church makes every effort to engage in religious dialogue with Islam. The truth that the plan of salvation includes all who acknowledge the Creator offers us *a solid basis for such dialogue and for peaceful coexistence with Muslims*.

5. I am pleased to learn that there are various initiatives directed towards *the apostolate of youth*. This apostolate should be one of your highest priorities, for the young people represent the future of the Church. Your youth associations need to be centres of formation in accordance with the teaching of the Church, and centres where young people prepare to assume political and social positions as citizens and Christian leaders. It is through your efforts in ensuring *the Christian education of youth* that the Church in Tanzania will be able to act as a vital moral force. In faithfulness to Jesus, you must hand on to your young people all that he commanded to be taught (Cfr. *Matth.* 28, 20).

6. I wish to express my *affection for all the priests*, both diocesan and religious, who labour with you in shepherding the flock. Each brother priest is meant to be with us "a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an Apostle, set apart for the Gospel of God" (*Rom.* 1, 1). The Second Vatican Council reminds us that "the ministry of priests takes its start from the Gospel message" (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 2). It goes on to emphasize that the ministry of the word finds its completion in the Eucharist, which is "the source and summit of the whole work of evangelization (*Ibid.* 5).

I would like to say this to you: always remember the importance of having a *fraternal love for your*

priests. " Before being the superiors and judges of your priests, be... always ready to understand, to sympathize and to help. In every possible way encourage your priests to be your personal friends and to be very open with you" (Pauli VI, *Sacerdotalis caelibatus*, 92). As brothers to your priests, you will share their burdens and help them grow spiritually through retreats and days of recollection. It is also of great benefit to their continuing formation to provide opportunities for theological renewal and study, so that they can deepen their understanding of the documents of the Second Vatican Council and of the Magisterium. In addition, these gatherings are an occasion for discussing together your pastoral concerns.

7. With gratitude to Almighty God I note *the increase in diocesan priests* in Tanzania. With the missionaries decreasing in number and not being replaced, it is ever more necessary for their work to be taken up by priests from among your own people.

I am pleased to learn that your *minor seminaries* have many students. This of course demands a careful selection of suitable candidates. Similarly, the attention and support which you give to your seminarians and to their training in the five *major seminaries* will ensure the quality of those whom you will ordain to the priesthood for service in your local Churches. I assure you of my solicitude in this endeavour, so essential to the Church's mission. I would also stress the importance of providing well-qualified priests for the spiritual, academic and pastoral formation of your seminarians.

I note that there has been a steady *growth in the number of Religious*. The members of the Institutes of consecrated life constitute a leaven of authentic Christian living, and it is important that every diocesan congregation of Religious should reflect its specific charism in appropriate forms of apostolic work. In your work with Religious I know that you will always show them the Church's *great love* for them in their lives of service.

Over the past hundred and twenty years the proclamation of the Gospel in Tanzania has been largely accomplished by *missionary priests, Sisters and Brothers*, who with great heroism and holiness have planted the seeds of the Church. Following their example, may you seek to further the growth of the Kingdom of God with immutable fidelity.

My Brothers: be assured of my continued prayers that the Host High God will bestow upon you and upon the people and Government of Tanzania the blessings of peace, justice and prosperity. I commend you and your local Churches to the intercession of Mary, who is "a sign of sure hope and solace for the pilgrim people of God" (*Lumen Gentium*, 68). In the love of Jesus her Son I impart my Apostolic Blessing.

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