



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY
TO MADAGASCAR, LA RÉUNION,
ZAMBIA AND MALAWI

WELCOME CEREMONY IN MALAWI

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

*Chileka Airport, Blantyre
Thursday, 4 May 1989*

*Your Excellency President Banda,
Distinguished Members of the Government of Malawi,
My Brother Bishops,
Brothers and Sisters in Christ,
Dear Friends,
Moni Nonse!*

1. My first thought on stepping on to Malawi soil is to *give thanks to God* for the privilege of visiting your country. I rejoice in the Divine Providence which for the first time has brought a Pope, the Successor of the Apostle Peter, to this part of Africa.

I am grateful to you, Mr President, for this warm welcome. Your kind invitation and that of the Catholic bishops have made possible my visit, to which I have been looking forward with joy and expectation. This year Malawi celebrates the *Twenty-fifth Anniversary of its Independence*. In terms of world history you are a young nation. In terms of your own experience you have already worked hard to consolidate the structures of peace and harmony which are fundamental for your development and growth. My stay among you allows me to share in your just pride in the achievements obtained so far.

2. The challenge of building Malawi into a united, just and peaceful society calls for the best efforts of all sectors of the population. Together you must work out your common destiny. With vision you have fixed your sights not only on economic advancement but on *authentic human development*, that is, development which responds also to the cultural, moral and spiritual dimensions of the people. Only by pursuing this more far-reaching goal can people find the freedom to be completely themselves, in the fullness of their rights and duties within the human family (Cfr. Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 46). As a true friend of Malawi, I wish to encourage you all – the President, Government and people of this beautiful country – to persevere with courage and dedication in building a society worthy of the highest ideals.

3. Difficulties are not lacking, and some of them are the result of events outside your borders. I am thinking in particular of the *hundreds of thousands* of people who have sought refuge in your land because of civil strife in neighbouring Mozambique. The international community acknowledges your generosity in feeding and sheltering these *refugees*, despite the great burden this places on your own resources. The situation has been further strained by drought last year and then by floods in recent months. Truly, you have acted in accordance with your best traditions and in a true spirit of compassion. I renew my appeal to the consciences of other nations and peoples to assist you in meeting the needs of those who are suffering on such a large scale.

4. My journey to you began in Rome, the City of the Apostles Peter and Paul, who gave their lives to bear witness to their faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. As the Successor of Peter in the Apostolic ministry, I greatly rejoice in this *visit to the Catholic community of Malawi*. I am happy to meet my brother bishops, the priests, religious and laity, with whom I am linked by bonds of grace and love in the great mystery of the Church. It has been a century since the first Catholic missionaries arrived in Malawi. They brought the gospel message of God's love made manifest in Jesus Christ and poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Cfr. *Rom.* 5, 5). The faith has taken root, and I am happy to know that the Church is continuing to make an ever greater contribution to Malawian society. By this visit I wish to *confirm* you, my brothers and sisters in Christ, *in the faith* which you have received, and encourage you in your wise and loving service to your country.

5. The evangelical message of love and of solidarity with our fellow men and women has a universal appeal. My encouragement is directed also to the *Christians of other Churches and Ecclesial Communities*, as well as the members of other religions, to join with one another and with men and women of good will everywhere in working for the good of mankind. I express this hope in the conviction that the true welfare of the individual and of society has a definite and important religious dimension. Each one has been given talents by God for the service of others, for we are all God's children, members of his household (Cfr. *Hebr.* 3, 26).

6. Mr President and dear friends: I offer a special *prayer* today for the people of Malawi. With God's help may your society be peaceful and harmonious, built on the solid foundations of justice and respect for the dignity and rights of all. May your lands yield rich harvests to compensate your

labours, so that you may enjoy the fruit of your work and an ever greater share of material benefits. May your faith in God and love of neighbour ever increase, so that you and your children may rejoice in abundant divine blessings.

To all who have prepared my visit, to all who have come *to welcome me today*, and to all who are listening to my voice, I say: Zikomo Kwambiri.