



The Holy See

PASTORAL JOURNEY
TO BENIN, UGANDA AND KHARTOUM (SUDAN)

FAREWELL CEREMONY

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

International Airport of Entebbe (Uganda)

Wednesday, 10 February 1993

*Your Excellency President Museveni,
My Brother Bishops,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Friends,*

1. The hour has come for me to bid farewell to your country. During the last few days, Uganda has let her light shine before the Pope, before Africa and before the world! I shall never forget the joyful faces of children, the hopeful faces of young people and the proud faces of all those dedicated to Uganda's future. I carry away with me *a treasury of memories*, "remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labour of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" (1Thess. 1: 3).

I am deeply grateful for the courtesy and hospitality with which you have received me during this Pastoral Visit to Uganda. On so many occasions, you have welcomed me with enthusiasm and affection. *You have spoken from your hearts to the heart of the Pope!* The esteem I already had for the people of this country has grown and deepened, and I believe I understand much more fully the hopes and aspirations you hold for the future, as well as the goals you are setting for yourselves as a Nation.

With profound appreciation, I thank you, Mister President, the civil authorities of Uganda, my

Brother Bishops and other religious leaders, those responsible for security during my stay, and those who have spread the hope and joy of these days through the press, radio and television. May God richly reward all who so carefully planned and fervently took part in the memorable events of these days!

I would also like to greet those who did not have an opportunity to join in the celebrations personally. *I am thinking especially of the handicapped, the sick and the elderly.* Their sufferings, united with those of Christ, are an inexhaustible fountain of grace for the Church (Cf. Col. 1: 24). On each of them I invoke the comfort and strength of God's blessing.

2. With her abundant human and natural resources, Uganda is called to be the *primary artisan of her own future!* Above all, you are in the process of determining the fundamental framework of Uganda's development as a nation. This is a decisive moment of your history. Present and future generations will live in harmony and thrive as a people insofar as all basic human rights and freedoms are enshrined in your country's laws and defended in the exercise of justice. In a just and well-ordered society the common good will be best served by the responsible participation of all citizens in public life (Cf. John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, 42). *And solidarity between all sectors of the population, which is a vital requirement, will become a reality insofar as your social institutions guarantee to all people their right to take part actively in Uganda's economic, political and cultural life!*

Although the Church's primary mission, her supreme duty, is to proclaim to all peoples the saving Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ (Cf. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 3), at the same time she is deeply concerned for the social dimension of human life. This concern belongs to her evangelizing mission as "an essential part of the Christian message" (Cf. John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 5). For this reason Uganda can count on the Catholic Church to foster the advancement of society through the many educational and social services which she provides. Claiming no special rights or privileges, *the Church asks only for the freedom necessary to carry out her mission of preaching the Gospel in its fullness and of serving the human family according to her principles* (Cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 76).

3. I came to Uganda to pay homage to your Martyrs, the citizens of heaven who guide our path on earth, to strengthen your faith in Jesus Christ and to encourage your admirable efforts to achieve national reconciliation and reconstruction.

How encouraging it is to see the Catholic Church in Uganda prayerfully scrutinizing the "signs of the times" (Cf. *ibid.*, 4). *You have committed yourselves to being a light to the world* (Cf. *ibid.* 5:16) – a world that so desperately needs the Christian message of hope: the Good News that human life is always precious, that justice and peace can prevail over exploitation and violence, and that social solidarity can replace selfish individualism. May God sustain you in your resolve! Once you have put your hand to the plough, says the Lord to his followers, you must not turn back (Cf. Lk. 9:

62).

Dear Friends: I leave you so that I may continue my pilgrimage to the Sudan. *The noble people of Uganda will remain for ever in my heart and in my prayers.* Having derived much joy and comfort from your love (Cf. Philem. 1: 7), I entrust you and your families to the goodness and loving kindness of God (Cf. Tt. 3: 4).

Ayi Katonda Kitaffe, kuuma Uganda. Mweraba. Omukama abakuume.
(May God the Father uphold Uganda. Thank you. May God bless you.)