



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT TO GREAT BRITAIN

WELCOME CEREMONY

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II

Gatwick International Airport

Friday, 28 May 1982

Praised be Jesus Christ!

1. I appreciate very much the cordial welcome expressed by His Grace the Duke of Norfolk in the name of Her Majesty the Queen. And with gratitude to God for the opportunity of being among you in the days ahead, I extend to all the people of Britain my greetings of friendship and peace.

You know that I have come on this pilgrimage of faith in order to make a pastoral visit to the Catholic Church here. Preparations for the journey began a long time ago, and I have been looking forward with joyful anticipation to the opportunity of celebrating the Eucharist and the other sacraments with the Catholic faithful of the local Churches. I am also grateful for the ecumenical encounters which will take place during this journey of faith. The promotion of Christian unity is of great importance, for it corresponds to the will of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The sign of unity among all Christians is likewise the way and instrument of effective evangelization. It is, therefore, my fervent prayer that the Lord will bless our efforts to fulfil his will: *Ut omnes unum sint* - "that they may all be one" (Jo. 17, 21).

2. My visit is taking place at a time of tension and anxiety, a time when the attention of the world has been focused on *the delicate situation of the conflict in the South Atlantic*. During the past weeks, there have been attempts at settling the dispute through diplomatic negotiations, but despite the sincere efforts of many, the situation has developed into one of armed confrontation. It has claimed numerous lives and has even threatened to expand to still more dreadful proportions.

This tragic situation has been one of most serious concern to me, and I have repeatedly asked Catholics throughout the world and all people of good will to join me in praying for a just and peaceful settlement. I have also appealed to the authorities of the nations involved, to the Secretary General of the United Nations and to other influential statesmen. In each case I have sought to encourage a solution which would avoid violence and bloodshed. As I stand here today, I renew my heartfelt appeal and I pray that such a settlement of the dispute will soon be reached.

3. At this moment of history, we stand in *urgent need of reconciliation*: reconciliation between nations and between peoples of different races and cultures; reconciliation of man within himself and with nature; reconciliation among people of different social conditions and beliefs, reconciliation among Christians. In a world scarred by hatred and injustice and divided by violence and oppression, the Church desires to be a spokesman for the vital task of fostering harmony and unity and forging new bonds of understanding and brotherhood.

4. And so I begin my pastoral visit to Britain with the words of our Lord Jesus Christ: "Peace be with you". May the God of peace and reconciliation be with you all. May he bless your families and homes with his deep and abiding peace.