



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY
OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO CAMEROON, SOUTH AFRICA AND KENYA

WELCOMING CEREMONY

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

*Johannesburg International Airport (South Africa)
Saturday, 16 September 1995*

*Dear President Mandela,
Dear Brother Bishops,
Dear South African Friends,*

1. From the depths of my heart I thank Almighty God for bringing me once more to Africa, a Continent which holds a central place in my affections and concerns as Bishop of Rome and Successor of the Apostle Peter. I come to South Africa with profound esteem for its peoples and their cultures. I am fully confident that the bonds of friendship between the Republic of South Africa and the Holy See, which last year led to the establishment of diplomatic relations between us, will continue to grow and intensify. I also hope some day soon to come back on a Pastoral Visit to the Catholic communities in those places which I will not now be able to visit.

Everywhere we look, Africa is being transformed. We do not yet know where change will lead. We do know that the hopes and expectations of millions of human beings cannot be ignored. They constitute a moral challenge for us all. That is why my present journey holds particular significance, first for myself and the members of the Catholic Church, but also, I would hope, for all those who have Africa's wellbeing at heart. The purpose of my visit in fact is to present the results of the *Special Session for Africa of the Synod of Bishops*, held last year in Rome. The Synod recommits the Church to working with all the means at her disposal for the spiritual and full human

advancement of Africa's peoples. The Catholic community throughout Africa will seek to be inwardly renewed in order to reach out in love to everyone, in the firm belief that by his Incarnation the Son of God has united himself in some fashion with every human being (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 22).

2. Today my journey brings me to South Africa, *to the new South Africa*, a nation firmly set on the course of reconciliation and harmony among all its citizens. At the beginning of my visit, I wish to pay tribute to you, Mr. President, who, after being a silent and suffering "witness" of your people's yearning for true liberation, now shoulder the burden of inspiring and challenging everyone to succeed in the task of national reconciliation and reconstruction. I remember our meeting at the Vatican in June 1990, shortly after your release from prison. In your kind words of welcome today I recognize the same spirit which sustained you then in the ideal of achieving a better life for the peoples of this Nation. To you and to former President F. W. de Klerk, joint recipients of the 1993 Nobel Peace Prize, we must all be grateful that you acted with wisdom and courage. And let us commend to God in our prayers all those who have worked and suffered and continue to strive for that day when everyone's dignity will be fully acknowledged, respected and safeguarded throughout this land and all over this Continent.

3. South Africa refers to itself as a "Rainbow Nation", indicating the diversity of races, ethnic groups, languages, culture and religions which characterize it. And you have the extremely rich concept of UBUNTU to guide you, according to the saying that "People are made people through other people". Certainly, the Government of National Unity's commitment to bring all the citizens of this land together in a united, fair and more prosperous society is shared by South Africa's Religious leaders, Christian, Jewish, Islamic, Hindu and Traditional, all of whom I greet with cordial esteem. By insisting on the things which unite, all believers can "build together", using their spiritual resources to keep alive the flame of hope on the horizon of humanity's march towards a brighter future.

4. With particular joy I greet *my Brother Bishops and the faithful of the Catholic Church of the whole southern part of this Continent*. It has been my hope and prayer to celebrate our faith together here in the Republic of South Africa, and to encourage you in the task of helping to heal the wounds of past injustices and educate the moral conscience of individuals and peoples concerning the demands of their human dignity and of Christian service.

5. [Translation from Dutch]:

(I gladly extend the hand of friendship to the representatives of the other Christian Churches and Communities in Southern Africa. We must do all we can to ensure that the intense ecumenical contacts and cooperation already existing between us will continue to be a source of deep and abiding harmony and, at the deeper level of our common faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, will make us ever more convincing signs and instruments of the unity of the whole human family and of its intimate communion with God (cf. Lumen Gentium, 1). Wherever I go I appeal to religious leaders

and all men and women of good will to foster that understanding and dialogue which alone make it possible for us to know each other, to break down prejudices, and successfully to meet the serious challenges of our times).

6. The epochal change for which South Africa is striving will require the best that each one can give in the service of the common good. It will demand much hard work and many sacrifices. Eventual success will ultimately be a gift from the Almighty, the Lord of life and of human history. May He sustain you, President Mandela, with the Vice-Presidents and the members of your Government and all your fellow-citizens, in the great task before you! I make my own the prayer of the Psalm: "*May the Lord give strength to his people! May the Lord bless his people with peace!*" (Ps. 29 [28]:11).

God bless you all!