



The Holy See

JOURNEY TO UGANDA

ADDRESS OF PAUL VI TO THE MEMBERS OF CATHOLIC ACTION AND OTHER CATHOLIC ASSOCIATIONS OF UGANDA

Friday, 1 August 1969

Our heart is filled with joy, beloved sons and daughters of Catholic Action, and members of other Catholic Associations, as We greet you, assembled here from all over Uganda and from many other countries. Each of your lands has consoled Us by impressive numbers of priestly and religious vocations. But We are well aware, as the Vatican Council asserted, that “the Church has not been truly established, nor is it a perfect sign of Christ among men, unless there exists a laity worthy of the name, working along with the Hierarchy” (*Ad Gentes*, No. 21).

In Africa, this vision has partly become a reality. Still, even greater efforts must be made today, when human society is being transformed so very rapidly. Lay men and women are in the front ranks of present-day evolution. In every domain—the family, society, the economy, culture—they are the irreplaceable builders and also the beneficiaries.

Because, by your very vocation, you are engaged in the great work of development, and because you represent here all the militant laity of Africa, We wish to give you the first announcement of a great project We have planned in connection with Our visit to Africa.

By Our Encyclical “*Populorum progression*”, and later by Our “*Message to Africa*”, We encouraged every effort towards true promotion of man in your countries, and described its Christian perspectives. Now, in order that this work be promoted, here in your presence, well aware that Our voice will be heard to the ends of the earth, We state Our solemn intention of making a very special contribution of support to those bodies devoted to the “search of a new humanism, which will enable modern man to find himself anew, by embracing the higher values of love and

friendship, of prayer and contemplation” (*Populorum progressio*, No. 20).

But We cannot carry out this great project, beloved sons and daughters, without you. As lay apostles, uniting your efforts with those of all men of good will, you cannot surely be less active, or inventive, or courageous, that your brothers, in constructing a more human world. On the contrary, in every action, no matter how humble, you will always be attentive to that particular development on which all the rest depends: namely, the development of men’s hearts in love, justice, liberty and truth.

For this is the specific action of the Church concerning development. “Closely united with men in their life and work, Christ’s disciples hope to render to others true witness of Christ, and to work for their salvation, even where they are not able to proclaim Christ fully” (*Ad Gentes*, No. 12). They are always ready to give an account of the hope that is in them (*1 Pet.* 3, 15).

“The Gospel cannot be deeply imprinted on the talents, life, and work of any people without the active presence of lay men” (*Ad Gentes*, No. 27). The development of zealous lay people, therefore, especially of the laity of Catholic Action, must be the constant concern of priests and religious, in close collaboration with the Hierarchy. Here, Africa can find and demonstrate new and original forms of lay organization and lay expression.

At the same time, Africa must neglect the centuries-old experience of many well established movements in other parts of the world. And, in the ranks of those movements, the African voice must be heard, and listened to with respect.

The Martyrs of Uganda were laymen, who did not hesitate to shed their blood for the Faith. To the lay men and women of today, they make a most compelling appeal, to follow in their footsteps through every-day tasks, striving for that holiness of life which brings a rich harvest of souls.

Upon Catholic Action, and the other Catholic Associations in Africa, upon all of you who march in their ranks, upon your families, your directors, and your associates, We lovingly bestow Our paternal Apostolic Blessing.