



# The Holy See

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APOSTOLIC PILGRIMAGE TO AFRICA

(MAY 2-12, 1980)

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II  
TO THE BISHOPS OF OTHER AFRICAN COUNTRIES  
VISITING KENYA**

*Nairobi*

*Wednesday, 7 May 1980*

*My dear Brothers in the Episcopate,*

1. It is a great pleasure for me to greet you here today. You have come as visitors to Kenya to show your solidarity with your brother Bishops and with their people. Since this is an extraordinary ecclesial celebration for them, you have wished to be close to them in the joy of the faith. In coming, you have brought with you not only the fellowship of your own local Churches, but a *special manifestation of Catholic unity*. And because you are members of the universal College of Bishops united with the Successor of Peter, you bear collective pastoral responsibility for the good of the whole Church and for her pastoral activities throughout the world. Hence, with an awareness of the deep reality of the Episcopate you have gathered in prayerful and fraternal solidarity.

2. Our being together today evokes quite naturally a consideration of our common ministry, our shared responsibility and our common likeness to Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word and the High Priest of the New Testament.

In Jesus Christ the Son of God we find *a fundamental insight into our deepest Christian identity*. In Jesus Christ the Good Shepherd we have a full perception - in simplicity and profundity - of all pastoral ministry in the Church of God. In Jesus Christ the Suffering Servant we discern the complete meaning of a sacrificial life. In Jesus Christ the Risen Lord we comprehend the final goal

of the Paschal Mystery - to which all our preaching and catechesis are directed.

3. All I wish to do in these moments with you is to direct my thoughts and yours to Jesus Christ - to him who is *Unigenitus Dei Filius*, but who has become *Primogenitus in multis fratribus*<sup>[1]</sup>. This Son of God, this Son of Mary, this Priest and Victim of Redemption *explains us to ourselves and declares the meaning of our ministry today and always*: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever"<sup>[2]</sup>.

As he called his Apostles, so he has also called us: to be his companions, to remain in his love, and to proclaim his Gospel. And in our full pastoral role as successors of the Apostles we are called to communicate Christ to our people. Sharing in his Sonship by divine adoption, we are instruments of grace for others, as we lead our people to the fullness of his life revealed in the mystery of the Church, the Body of Christ.

4. Our identity and our mission, as well as the term of our mission, are all linked to Christ in his Sonship; we are conformed to him. Because of this likeness to Christ, we have great joy and comfort *in living two dynamic aspects of Christ's life*. With Christ we are conscious of loving the Father; his words pervade our consciousness and our daily activity as Bishops: "*I love the Father*"<sup>[3]</sup>.

At the same time each of us in Christ can say: "*The Father loves me*", precisely because Jesus has said: "the Father loves the Son"<sup>[4]</sup>. This awareness of being in Christ, of loving his Father and being loved by him is a *source of pastoral strength*. It confirms the meaning of our lives. It is a reason for thanksgiving to the Father and for endless praise of Jesus Christ.

Dear brother Bishops: -In the months and years ahead, may it bring us gladness to recall that in Kenya we manifested our episcopal unity together *by praising Jesus Christ* the Eternal Son of God.

To him be glory for ever, with the Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

<sup>[1]</sup> *Rom.* 8, 29.

<sup>[2]</sup> *Hebr.* 13, 8.

<sup>[3]</sup> *Io.* 14, 30.

<sup>[4]</sup> *Ibid.* 3, 35.

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