



# The Holy See

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## APOSTOLIC PILGRIMAGE TO AFRICA

(MAY 2-12, 1980)

### **ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE SEMINARIANS**

*Kumasi (Ghana)*

*Friday, 9 May 1980*

*Dear seminarians,*

1. I am always happy to talk to young men who are preparing for the priesthood. Today I am particularly happy to meet you in your own country.
2. Even though you are young, you are able by your lives to teach the world a great lesson. What is this lesson? It is the lesson of *faith*. Your lives show that you believe in Jesus Christ and that you want to follow him. You accept him as God, as the Son of God who took on a human nature, who became man, and who became your brother and mine. You believe that he died on the Cross, and became your Saviour and mine. And you believe that he rose from the dead, and made it possible for you and me and everybody to live for ever. This is the Jesus whom you have come to know and love, the Jesus in whom you have put your faith.
3. Yes, you believe in the Person of Jesus, and you also believe that his grace is strong - that it can overcome sin. You believe that Jesus can give you the grace to follow him, to come after him, to be like him. *And that is what you want to do: to be like Jesus the priest* - to spread the Good News that Jesus brought, to tell the world about salvation, and to give people the bread of eternal life.
4. So faith in Jesus is important for you now and in the future. *Your life as a seminarian depends on faith*; faith is the foundation of the life of every priest. Faith means accepting Jesus into your

lives, taking his message into your hearts, obeying his commandments. It also means being filled with the joy and love of Jesus. And the more this happens, the more you will be able to show Jesus to the world - the Jesus who lives in you and who wants to work through you.

*When you live by faith and follow Christ's commandments, you are able to give a dynamic example to other young people.* You are able to show by your lives and by the example of your Christian joy that Jesus' love is important - important for you in your vocation, and important for all your brothers and sisters who are trying to discover the fullness of their humanity. Living in this way, you can see that you have already begun the task of communicating Christ, of bringing him to your friends and to the other youth of Ghana.

5. At the same time your fidelity to Christ, your courage to say yes to your special vocation, your faith in the power of Jesus to sustain you in his love during your whole life is a strong support for other young people of your age who have heard the call of the Good Shepherd and want to follow it faithfully. You know how much your country and all Africa needs priests - workers in the Lord's harvest. Remember the words of Jesus: "... lift up your eyes, and see how the fields are white for the harvest"<sup>[1]</sup>.

*And pray for vocations*, pray for perseverance in your own vocation, pray that the Church in Africa will have the strength and fervour to supply the priests that Christ needs to preach his Gospel and to carry his message of salvation throughout this continent.

6. Dear seminarians: stay close to Jesus through prayer and the Holy Eucharist. And so by the way you live, let everybody know that you really do have faith, that you really believe in our Lord Jesus Christ.

And stay close also to our Blessed Mother Mary and to her Immaculate Heart. When Mary said yes to the angel, the mystery of Redemption took shape beneath her Heart. This pure Heart of Mary was the inspiration for many of the missionaries who brought the word of God to the African people. And for the Church today this Heart of Mary continues to express the mystery of the Mother in Redemption .

In the name of Jesus, I bless you all. And I commend you and your families and friends to Mary, who is the Mother of us all.

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[1] Jn 4:35.

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