



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE BISHOPS OF THE EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE
OF TANZANIA ON THEIR AD LIMINA VISIT**

Monday, 26 October 1992

Your Eminence,

Dear Brother Bishops,

1. As I welcome you, the *Bishops of Tanzania*, on the occasion of your *ad Limina* visit, it is fitting to acclaim our Saviour in a language rooted in the African soil: *Tumsifu Yesu Kristu!* (Praised be Jesus Christ!). In this way I wish to evoke the treasured memories of my Pastoral Visit to your country just over two years ago, and to renew my heartfelt thanksgiving to God for the growth of his Church in your midst.

I am grateful to you, Bishop Lebulu, for the sentiments of affection and loyalty expressed in the name of you all. To my dear Brother, Cardinal Rugambwa – the first son of black Africa to become a member of the College of Cardinals – I offer the Church's immense gratitude for your many years of devoted pastoral zeal.

Your pilgrimage *ad limina Apostolorum* is a pre-eminently personal act for each of you. In coming "to see Peter" (Cf. Gal. 1:18) you confess the apostolic faith before the world and proclaim that the Church is the Bride of the Divine Redeemer and his instrument for mankind's salvation. In giving *an account of your stewardship*, you praise the Lord's goodness for all that he has accomplished through you, you beg his mercy for human failings and ask his strength that you may return to your pastoral labours with renewed vigour.

2. Not long ago you celebrated the first centenary of the arrival of the Gospel in Tanzania. That event, a cause of much joy for all the faithful, helps us to recognize the generosity of God, who has already brought forth in your midst such abundant fruits of justice and holiness. Special tribute

is due to the *missionaries* of the past who worked so tirelessly to build up the People of God in your land. In our own day they have worthy successors who have likewise left home and family in order to offer you their indispensable assistance in spreading the Kingdom of God (Cf. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 65-66). The Gospel must still be preached to the millions among you who have not yet heard it, and it must be proclaimed anew to those who have already learned of Christ but have yet to allow his word to take deep root in their lives. It is fitting that responsibility for *this noble task is passing ever more fully into the hands of Tanzania's native clergy, Religious and laity*, especially the catechists, and I share your joy in their readiness to be missionaries in their homeland.

3. The urgency of fulfilling Christ's command to "make disciples of all nations" (Mt. 28:19) is the basis for the mention in many of your quinquennial reports of the scarcity of labourers to take up the work of evangelization. Even the present abundance of *Tanzanian vocations* to the priesthood and religious life – for which I join you in thanking the Lord of the harvest – are not enough. You and your communities must continue to pray for this intention (Cf. *ibid.*, 9:38) with sure confidence in the Lord, "who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4).

One of your principal concerns must be to ensure that your *co-workers in building up the Body of Christ are properly trained for this noble task*. Not only must they have the necessary knowledge and skills, but above all they need to possess that depth of faith and Christian virtue which will enable them to be, in word and deed, credible witnesses to the new creation established by our Saviour.

In order to help you to solve the problem of how adequately to train an increasing number of seminarians, I wish to reaffirm the wisdom so often expressed by my predecessors and restated by the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council: without hesitation send your best priests to serve in your seminaries (Cf. *Optatam Totius*, 5). In every aspect of their seminary programmes, candidates for the priesthood must be shown the true identity of the priest—that he is configured to Christ the Good Shepherd and called to make present the Lord's love for the flock (Cf. John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 21-23). In Minor Seminaries no less than in the years immediately preceding Ordination the goal of formation must be to help each candidate to "put on" Christ (Cf. Gal. 3:27) and to pattern his life on the example of the Redeemer. As the Council Fathers pointed out, the essential means for achieving this end is "special religious formation and above all... spiritual direction" (*Optatam Totius*, 3).

A vital element of training for the priesthood is *the practice of prayer and penance*. The habit of daily meditation helps the seminarian and priest to grow in the knowledge and love of Christ, and in the resolve to imitate him in all things. A growing awareness of God's goodness is the natural flowering of a life of prayer; it overflows into contrition for sin and gives rise to a firm resolve to love God even as he has first loved us (Cf. 1 Jn. 4:19). The practice of the virtue of penance leads to

the worthy celebration of the *Sacrament of Reconciliation*. Priests who persevere in daily *metanoia* and who seal this in frequent and regular recourse to Confession will be the spiritual fathers whom the children of God long for and whom Christ ardently desires to send them. Priests whose lives are stamped with the grace of humble repentance will be an irresistible force for the renewal of the practice of the Sacrament of Penance among the lay faithful whom they serve.

The solid foundation laid in the seminary must be sustained after ordination by *continuing formation* (Cf. John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, chapt. VI). Without it, priests will find it more difficult to live up to their ideals and commitments. A Bishop must make the spiritual well-being of his priests his constant care, and give them particular attention in the first years after ordination (Cf. *ibid.*, 76).

4. The evangelical counsels are a divine gift which the Church has received from her Lord, and *religious communities not only stimulate the holiness of their own members but contribute marvellously to the welfare of the whole body of Christ* (Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 43). Of this you have such clear evidence in the life and work of Religious in Tanzania, particularly the many women religious belonging to diocesan Congregations. Through your Conference, you can also foster greater cooperation among these Institutes. You can do much to encourage them to live their evangelical consecration ever more profoundly, especially by helping them to develop programmes of spiritual and apostolic formation and, in line with evangelical poverty, by assisting them to secure the necessary economic base for the proper functioning of their communities. Initiatives aimed at raising the standard of education of Religious are especially welcome. This in turn increases the ability of religious Sisters to appropriate at a deeply personal level the essential elements of consecrated life, and achieve the human and Christian maturity to which they are called in Christ. Thus prepared, they will be able effectively to serve the needs of the universal Church.

5. Changes in Tanzanian society are influencing the context in which the Church must fulfil her mission. The relative youth of the majority of the population, growing urbanization, the transition to new forms of political organization and the shifting composition of religious affiliation call for new responses from pastors and faithful. Problems such as poverty and unemployment, the lack of resources for education and health care, the spread of life-threatening diseases, the increase of materialism and the erosion of family unity present obstacles to the advance of God's Kingdom – challenges which call for great trust in the power of the Risen Christ to triumph over every evil.

The task of enabling the lay faithful of Tanzania to exercise more perfectly their baptismal vocation in this social milieu has led you to provide *ever more effective pastoral care for families and a sound Christian formation for young people*. I note with particular interest that you have chosen to observe the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Tanzania Lay Council by conducting throughout the country seminars on the theme "Justice and Peace in the Family". This decision represents a clear recognition of the fact that a Christian marriage, because it is animated by a spirit of full mutual

self-giving, is the proper "school" for educating the next generation in the moral virtues essential for social living (Cf. John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 37). Do not let yourselves become discouraged in the long struggle to teach the true nature of marriage and to sustain couples in the faithful observance of all the demands of the Christian marriage covenant. Take fresh heart from the knowledge that in every Christian family which obeys God's law there is a luminous power inviting others to discover the richness of the Gospel message of life and love.

6. I am gratified to see that, in the context of the cordial relations between Church and State in Tanzania, Catholics are seeking to further the nation's progress towards a development that is worthy of the human person. *Dialogue with Christians* of other Churches and ecclesial communities and *mutual understanding with the followers of Islam* are an essential part of this effort. Such exchanges enable the faithful to share with their neighbours the Church's teaching on the nature of the common good and the right means to achieve it. Your Pastoral Letter of last June, "True Human Development", offers significant elements for a wide-ranging reflection on how society can best serve the needs of all its citizens and their inalienable dignity. You rightly point out that it is only by accepting the divine plan for the human person and for all creation that any attempt at development can really succeed.

Recognition of this truth is particularly important as the Government of Tanzania considers a "National Population Policy". An initiative of this kind needs to secure the inviolable freedom of married couples in the exercise of responsible parenthood. It should uphold the sacredness of life from conception to the moment of death, and – with due regard for the rights of parents in educational matters – should seek to foster in young people a sound understanding of the nature of human sexuality.

The Church in Tanzania can be proud that its *long tradition of service in the areas of health care and education* has prompted civil leaders to ask it to intensify its activities in these spheres. I am confident that you will make every effort to build on already existing bases in order better to serve the good of all, with the love which God has poured forth into your hearts (Cf. Rom. 5:5). Christians' care for the victims of AIDS and their support of those orphaned by it reveal in a tangible way the compassion of Christ for the suffering and inspire hope in the face of so much suffering.

7. Dear Brother Bishops, take back to your beloved homeland the assurance of my esteem and affection for all your people. Remind your priests, Religious and laity of my love in Christ Jesus, and tell them how in Rome "we always mention them in our prayers and thank God for them all" (1 Thess. 1:2). Commending the Catholics of Tanzania to the loving intercession of Mary, I willingly impart my Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of unity and peace in her Divine Son.

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