



The Holy See

JOURNEY TO UGANDA

**ADDRESS OF PAUL VI
TO THE PARLIAMENT OF UGANDA***

Kampala - Friday, 1 August 1969

Gentlemen,

It may be well to begin by introducing each other.

Who are We? You are not, perhaps, led astray by the opinion held of Us by certain contemporaries; We are a weak and little man like other men, perhaps more so than other men. Have understanding for Our personal littleness. But We make so bold as to present Ourselves to you under a twofold title: one title is Our own - it is the great love We have for Africa, for you, and for the Peoples you govern and represent; the other title is not Our own - it was conferred upon Us, and it makes Us humble and bold as We come among you: you know it well, it is the title of Pope, which means Father; and We inherited it from Saint Peter, whose unworthy but authentic successor We are. It was Saint Peter whom Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, constituted as the foundation of His Church, which during nearly twenty centuries has spread throughout the world and also in Uganda. It is as Pastor of the Catholic Church that We are here. We present Ourselves to you, and speak, to you also, His simple and solemn words: Peace be to you!

In saying "to you", We recognize who you are: Africans, invested with authority and responsibility, and representing in your office the image, or rather the reality, of the new Africa. In your persons. We salute your Africa, all of Africa, even those regions which are not physically represented here today. We do not conceal from you the emotion which this meeting stirs up in Our mind. Willingly do We recognize the singular importance and deep significance of this moment. Africa, personified by its highest, most qualified and most cultured exponents, is greeted by the entire Catholic Church, through the authorized voice of its humble head. It seems to Us that this is a unique

recognition of the new Africa, emancipated from its past, and ripe for a new era; and We pray to God that this recognition may be historically and prophetically valuable for Africa's improved future destiny. Permit Us to express this wish, rising from Our very heart, and formed by Our lips, in its fullest and truest meaning: Long live Africa!

Gentlemen,

We avail Ourselves of this opportunity also to declare to you what the Catholic Church does, and what she does not do, on this Continent - and, indeed, wherever she carries on her mission. The Church thanks you for your recognition of her freedom: freedom to exist, and to fulfil her mission. She appreciates this freedom, which means independence in her proper domain, the religious domain; which also means her autonomy in religious matters, together with respect for the political authority. She has no temporal interests of her own; she does not engage in politics in the proper sense of the term; she renders to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's (cf. *Mt.* 22, 21); nor does she intend, while performing her mission, to impose the particular traits of so called Western culture, at the expense of the good, human characteristics of African culture. Have no fear of the Church; she honours you, she educates honest and loyal citizens for you, she does not foment rivalries and divisions, she seeks to promote healthy liberty, social justice, and peace. If she has any preference at all, it is for the poor, for the education of little ones and of the people, for the care of the suffering and abandoned (cf. Enc. *Mater et Magistra*, Introd.; *Gaudium et Spes*, No. 42, 76, 88, etc.). The Church does not make her faithful sons strangers to civil life and national interests; on the contrary, she trains and engages them in the service of the public good (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, No. 75, etc.).

There is, however, a programme of the temporal order which the Church fosters today, not her programme, but your own; and to it she intends to give her moral support and also, as far as possible, her practical support: that is, the programme of the development of peoples. As you know, We have written an Encyclical Letter - that is, a message to the Church and to the entire world - entitled *Populorum progressio* on this very theme; and We reiterated its purposes in the message which We addressed directly to Africa, on October the twenty-ninth, nineteen hundred and sixty-seven, entitled *Africae Terrarum* (A.A.S. 1967, pp. 1073 seqq.). By these documents, We wished to underline the fundamental aspiration of the Peoples of the Third World to that justice to which they have full right, as much as every other Nation; for development is truly an indisputable exigency of justice. Neither colonialism nor neo-colonialism is its theme, but aid and impulse to the African people, that they may be able to express, in their proper genius and by their own strength, those political, social, economic and cultural structures which are proportionate to their needs, and coordinated with international society and modern civilization. Have no fear of the Church! She takes nothing away from you; rather, she brings you, together with her moral and practical support, what we believe to be the only, the true, the highest interpretation of human life in time, and beyond time - the Christian interpretation.

It is by the light of that interpretation that the Church observes your great problems. In Our opinion, these problems can be considered from a twofold point of view: one being the freedom of national territories, the other being the equality of races. What We mean now by that word of many meanings, "freedom", is civil independence, political self-determination, emancipation from the domination of other powers extraneous to the African population. This is an event which dominates world history, and which Our predecessor Pope John the Twenty-Third defined as a sign of the times (cf. Enc. *Pacem in Terris*, Nos. 40-41; A.A.S. 1963, p. 268). In other words, it is a fact arising from the greater awareness which men have acquired of their own dignity, both as individuals, and as a community of people; it is a fact which reveals the irreversible current of history, corresponding, no doubt, to a providential plan pointing out the right direction to all those invested with responsibility, above all in the political field.

No one, as that venerated Predecessor of Ours observed, likes to feel himself subjected to political powers wielded from outside his own national or ethnic community. Therefore the Peoples of Africa have themselves assumed the responsibility for their own destiny. The Church greets this event with satisfaction, for there is no doubt that it marks a decisive step forward on the path of human civilization; and she greets it with pleasure, because she is convinced that she has, in the sphere of her proper action, made her contribution, namely, in the sphere of human conscience made more aware by the Gospel message; for by the light of that message the dignity of a people are seen more clearly, and the demands arising from that dignity are recognized. Those demands have their reflection in every aspect of human life, which is elevated to the fulness of personal responsibility, and inserted into a collectivity governed by justice and love.

We are happy to state this, here in Uganda, the land of the martyrs who shed their blood in celebration of that lofty value of freedom, of strength, of dignity, deriving from their religious faith; thus they affirmed that it is not possible, today less than ever, to have a well ordered, dignified and fruitful life in common among human beings, unless it is founded upon the recognition, the protection, and the promotion of their fundamental rights, precisely in as much as they are men, and sons of God; and of their consequent duties, precisely in so far as they are members of a society ordained to function for the good of its citizens.

These are the fundamental criteria, of the moral order, which shed light upon the path to be followed, but do not remove the obstacles which encumber it, especially where these criteria have not yet found their normal application, Herein, the judgement to be made upon concrete situations devolves directly upon the responsible authorities and, in cases of particular gravity, also upon the conscience of the citizens. We should here quote long and beautiful passages from the Pastoral Constitution of the recent Ecumenical Council (*Gaudium et Spes*, Nos. 73, 74, 75).

Today, unfortunately, situations have arisen in the world, and also in Africa, of such unease and such aversion to peaceful life in common, that renewed and unhappy currency has been given to the baneful words which signify war, as if they expressed an inescapable necessity. The Church,

by her very nature, by her evangelical principle of “non-violence” cannot adopt this inhuman language; rather, she suffers inwardly because of the causes such language supposes, and the effects it engenders.

We cannot but remember, among the other victims of these mournful events, the refugees and their sufferings.

We shall be faithful, unto its uttermost consequences, to one programme only - that of “justice and peace” - which is the programme of Christ. No longer should violence be the means of resolving disagreements among men, but reason and love. No longer man against man, but man for man, and with man, in brotherhood.

We shall go farther, although speaking as a simple man. We believe that, today, conflicts between peoples can be resolved by a better and more efficacious way than the way of violence. Human relationship must not be regulated by the confrontation of forces unleashed for slaughter and destruction, but by reasonable negotiations, upheld by the international institutions, to which we must give authority, efficiency, and confidence. We express again, on this occasion also, Our hope for an ever more active efficiency of those institutions.

Moreover, in the question of colonialism and neo-colonialism still a burning question in Africa - and both of which can be reproved for having too often let economic interests prevail unilaterally over human considerations, it is clear that the interested peoples have the right to aspire to their own legitimate autonomy; nevertheless, in certain concrete situations, the best method of attaining it will be the method - perhaps a little slower, but surer - of first preparing men and institutions capable of true sturdy self-government ; and We wish to believe that such preparation will not only not be impeded, but will be favoured, with due order and in collaboration, by the responsible authorities, during a period of symbiosis between the native populations and those of foreign origin, in such a way that cultural, civil, and economic structures may be formed, capable of making preparation, at every level of society, for responsibility, and for the sense of the common good, in view of accession to a true sovereignty, so as not to fall, on the other side, into the snares of other insidious enslavements.

As far as We are concerned, the Church - although under very different conditions - already follows this method, by preparing Bishops, clergy, religious and laity, native to the territory in which she carries on her mission of faith and charity; and We are confident that a beginning can soon be made in instituting a local Hierarchy in those other African countries where, up to now, this has not been possible.

Another great problem is that of the diversity of races. Even at the cost of seeming naive, We shall continue to assert that it can be solved in a very simple way, that is, by stripping it of its character of antagonism, rivalry, unequal rights, ethnic hatred, physical dislike. In a word this is a problem

which is solved by reducing it to its lowest denominator. We do not wish to conceal the serious practical difficulties this presents. There may be free and reasonable measures of respect due to the customs, character, and culture of the various ethnic families; but we, as Christians, can never forget that the Church condemns “any discrimination against men, or harassment of them, because of their race, colour, condition of life, or religion” (Council Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, No. 5); and the Vatican Council also said: “Since all men possess a rational soul, and are created in God’s likeness, since they have the same nature and origin, have been redeemed by Christ, and enjoy the same divine calling and destiny, the basic equality of all must receive increasingly greater recognition” (*Gaudium et Spes*, No. 29). Even as men, we must always remember that the path of civilization proceeds towards the recognition of the equality of men, since, as men, they possess the same fundamental dignity, and its consequent rights. For this reason, We deplore ‘the fact that, in certain parts of the world, there persist social situations based upon racial discrimination, and often willed and sustained by systems of thought; such situations constitute a manifest and inadmissible affront to the fundamental rights of the human person, and to the laws of civilized living. The negative problem of exclusivist racism is resolved by pluralism, if properly understood.

You Africans have a deep sense of community; it is one of your most attractive and human characteristics. But the feeling of a particular community is no longer sufficient; this sense must be widened out to the feeling of the civil, the national, and even the international community. Your experience, will have taught you that independence does not imply either opposition, or isolation, between African peoples and non-African peoples; on the contrary, the new African States will be truly independent to the extent that they are capable of collaborating freely with other States, and with the entire, orderly, international family of the world. The great Christian commandment to love our neighbour thus finds an ever wider application; it tends towards a universal love - and in this respect the Catholic Church can be a good teacher to all.

It is a magnificent commandment, but it is difficult, because it requires that we overcome particular egoisms; yet, it is the precept which bears within itself the great gift of Peace.

We wish to conclude Our discourse with this word: Peace!

It is a painful word, because today - in a region of Africa dear to Us, since, years ago, We were able to visit and admire it - there still rages, as you know, an agonizing conflict. We have not only sought to secure good and medical assistance, impartially and by every means available to Us, but have also tried to apply the remedy of a certain initial reconciliation. Up to now, We have not succeeded, and this gives Us heartfelt pain; but We are resolved to continue Our modest, but affectionate and fair efforts of persuasion, to help heal this fatal dissension.

Peace! It is a word both human and Christian, and worthy to be understood and lived by young Africa which, in peace, can find its definitive, modern political and social adjustment, and its

economic and cultural prosperity, giving to this world of ours, which seems to be tempted anew by the demon of discord, armaments, and rivalries, the example of a new and truer conception of civilization, that founded upon effective brotherhood among peoples, between classes, between parties, between rates, between religions, between families.

Peace! It is the kindest and best word We have in Our heart. We say it to you, Mister President, as a sign of gratitude for the welcome given Us; We say it to all the personages here present; and We send it forth as a hopeful blessing over this whole Continent - Peace to all of Africa!

*AAS 61 (1969), p.580-586.

Insegnamenti di Paolo VI, vol. VII, p.547-554.

L'Osservatore Romano 2.8.1969, p.1.

ORa n.32 p.1, 12.