



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC PILGRIMAGE TO AFRICA

(MAY 2-12, 1980)

***ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
AT THE DEPARTURE FROM GHANA***

Accra

Saturday, 10 May 1980

Dear Friends in Ghana,

1. The journeys of the Pope to the different continents and countries of the world all have one characteristic in common: the visits are always too short! Perhaps too short for you, but certainly too short for me! I would have loved to spend more time with you, to travel through your country from North to South, from East to West, to be with you in your homes, to visit your children in their schools, to accompany you to your fields or to the river, and to listen to your songs. But so many more of your African brothers and sisters are waiting for me.

The two days that I have spent with you have been days of great joy and spiritual consolation for me. I shall for ever cherish in my memory and in my heart the impressions of this happy occasion. I shall remember your friendly people and courteous authorities, the smiling faces of your children and the wisdom of your elders.

I shall above all carry with me the image of a people that wants to be faithful to its own cultural heritage, and at the same time move forward in peace, and in truth - which is the power of peace - towards a more just situation through constant material, social and moral progress.

2. My gratitude for the hospitality shown by this land and its people to the Head of the Catholic Church, who is the servant of humanity, will be expressed in fervent prayer for each one of you and for your entire nation. I shall ask God, who is all-powerful and good, who created all things

and without whom no life can exist, to guide and strengthen this nation in the pursuit of true happiness for all its citizens. Because we are all children of one and the same heavenly Father, created to his image and likeness^[1], every human being, every Ghanaian has a fundamental right to the conditions that are in keeping with his or her dignity.

I shall raise my prayer to God that Ghana may achieve true progress through the development of all the natural and human resources with which it has been blessed, and that it will benefit from the will of the international community to create throughout the world and the African continent just and equitable relations in all fields of human endeavour. I shall pray especially that the continuing development of Ghana will be achieved while safeguarding the authentic human values which have been, up to the present, the glory of your people: hospitality, magnanimity, respect for the elders, a sense of community, and reference to God in all your relations.

3. My deep gratitude goes to His Excellency the President of Ghana for his courteous and warm welcome, which I would be most happy to reciprocate in the Vatican. I thank the authorities and all who have given so much of their time and effort to prepare this visit and to make it such a rewarding experience for me. I express my cordial appreciation also to the journalists and to all the people of the media, through whom I was able to reach out to a vast audience, telling all Ghanaians that the Pope holds them in his heart; at the same time the world was able to come into close contact with the warm and noble people of this land.

I cannot take leave of this hospitable country without addressing a special word of thanks to you the Bishops and the whole Catholic community for everything you have done to give me this unforgettable welcome, but also, and even more, for what you are: true Ghanaians and true Christians. Be "firm in your faith"^[2]. Always remember that you have been baptized in Christ Jesus, and that therefore, beyond any differences of ethnic origin, education or position, "you are all one in Christ Jesus"^[3].

Goodbye now! Thank you, and may God bless this beloved land of Ghana!

^[1] Cfr. *Gen.* 1, 26.

^[2] *1 Petr.* 5, 9.

^[3] *Gal.* 3, 28.

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