



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC PILGRIMAGE TO NIGERIA, BENIN

GABON AND EQUATORIAL GUINEA

***ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE MUSLIM RELIGIOUS LEADERS***

Kaduna (Nigeria)

Sunday, 14 February 1982

*Mister Governor,
all authorities,*

This speech, this text, was intended for Muslim religious leaders. I am now addressing the same words to you, who are representing the whole population of Kaduna State, and especially the Muslim population.

Dear friends,

1. I am happy to have this encounter with you, the Muslim religious leaders in Nigeria. I warmly greet you and through you I send my greetings to the many millions of Muslims of this great country. I have come to Nigeria to visit my brothers and sisters of the Catholic Church, but my journey would be incomplete without this meeting. Be assured therefore that I am very pleased at this opportunity to express to you my sentiments of fraternal respect and esteem.

2. All of us, Christians and Muslims, live under the sun of the one merciful God.

We both believe in one God who is the Creator of Man. We acclaim God's sovereignty and we defend man's dignity as God's servant. We adore God and profess total submission to him. Thus, in a true sense, we can call one another brothers and sisters in faith in the one God. And we are grateful for this faith, since without God the life of man would be like the heavens without the sun.

Because of this faith that we have in God, Christianity and Islam have many things in common: the privilege of prayer, the duty of justice accompanied by compassion and almsgiving, and above all a sacred respect for the dignity of man, which is at the foundation of the basic rights of every human being, including the right to life of the unborn child.

We Christians have received from Jesus, our Lord and Master, the fundamental law of love of God and love of neighbour. I know that this law of love has a profound echo in your hearts too, for in your sacred book, together with the invitation to faith, you are exhorted to excel in good works (cf. *Sura* 5,51).

3. In the world today there are many dangers which threaten the family, that precious nucleus of society wherein each human life begins and develops. I would assure you that Christians have a special concern for the family, for its unity, enrichment and protection. I speak of this concern with you because I am confident that you too are aware of the importance of the values of the family and wish to cooperate with Christians in efforts aimed at strengthening and supporting family life.

Permit me to mention some additional areas where Christians and Muslims can cooperate more.

We can engage in dialogue, in order to understand each other better at both the level of the scholars and in person-to-person relationships, in the family and in places of work and play.

We can promote more honesty and discipline in private and public life, greater courage and wisdom in politics, the elimination of political antagonisms, and the removal of discrimination because of a person's race, colour, ethnic origin, religion or sex.

Both of us can spearhead the principle and practice of religious freedom, ensuring its application especially in the religious education of children. When the right of each child to worship God is complemented by his or her right to religious education, then all society is enriched and its members are well equipped for life. Religious education takes on increased importance today, since certain elements in society seek to forget and even to destroy the spiritual aspect of man.

4. Why do I speak of these issues with you? Because you are Muslims, and like us Christians, you believe in the one God who is the source of all the rights and values of mankind. Furthermore I am convinced that if we join hands in the name of God we can accomplish much good. We can work together for harmony and national unity, in sincerity and greater mutual confidence. We can collaborate in the promotion of justice, peace and development. It is my earnest hope that our solidarity of brotherhood, under God, will truly enhance the future of Nigeria and all Africa, and add to the good ordering of the world as a universal civilization of love.

May the Almighty and Merciful God turn his face towards you and bless you. May he guide you. May he fill you with his peace and give joy to your hearts.

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