



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO TOGO, IVORY COAST, CAMEROON,
CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC, ZAIRE, KENYA AND MOROCCO

**ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO THE LEADERS AND REPRESENTATIVES
OF THE ISLAMIC AND HINDU COMMUNITIES IN KENYA**

Nairobi (Kenya)

Sunday, 18 August 1985

Dear Friends,

1. It is a great joy for me to return to Nairobi. And I am grateful for this opportunity to meet leaders and representatives of *the Islamic and Hindu communities in Kenya*. You may recall that I had the pleasure of meeting some of you before, on the occasion of my visit in May 1980. Once again, we come together in friendship and peace. The warm hospitality you showed me on my previous visit and are showing me again today is a sign of your openness and your commitment to human fraternity. These are sentiments which I eagerly desire to reciprocate.

2. On my first visit to Kenya, I stated in my message to the Hindu community: "The purpose of life, the nature of good, the path to happiness, the meaning of death and the end of our human journey - all these truths form the object of our common service of man in his many needs . . ." (Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Allocutio ad sodales communitatis hinduisticae in aede Nuntiaturae Apostolicae in urbe "Nairobi" habita, die 7 maii 1980: Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, III, 1 (1980) 1212). I would like to reaffirm these words today; they hold true also for the Catholic Church's relationship with the Muslim people.

Humanity's needs are of many kinds. Foremost are *the spiritual needs*, such as our constant search for meaning in life and our desire to live in a way that is worthy of our human dignity as children of God. At the same time, we cannot discount man's material needs, which in many

African countries today, marked by drought and famine, mean the fundamental struggle to survive. I am thinking particularly of the *plight of refugees*, whether they be people who have fled across international borders from repressive situations or zones of war, or those who are forced to migrate from their native districts due to crop failures and natural disasters. The refugee situation in the world today must become the concern of all religious believers who value the dignity of man. It is an urgent need which requires fraternal solidarity and collaboration in favour of those who suffer.

In addition to these spiritual and material needs, there are *the social needs*: the need for just, honest and efficient government; the need to respect and defend human rights without any discrimination on the basis of race, ethnic group, religion, age, social class or sex; the right to live and raise one's family in peace, without fear that their physical and moral well-being will be menaced. In the face of all these human needs - spiritual, material and social - the religions of the world cannot remain passive. The great needs of our brothers and sisters are an urgent plea for a generous response in love, calling for mutual and effective collaboration.

3. The close bonds linking our respective religions - our worship of God and the spiritual values we hold in esteem - motivate us to become *fraternal allies in service* to the human family. As I said to the Islamic community of Kenya five years ago: "Our relationship of reciprocal esteem and mutual desire for authentic service to humanity urge us on to joint commitments in promoting peace, social justice, moral values and all the true freedoms of man" (Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Allocutio ad sodales communitatis musulmanae in aede Nuntiaturae Apostolicae in urbe "Nairobi" habita, die 7 maii 1980*: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, III, 1 (1980) 1210).

The evils of suspicion, competition and misunderstanding spring up too easily in our modern world; in far too many places we witness violence, conflict and war. But it is never God's will that there should exist hatred within the human family, that we should live in distrust and at enmity with one another. We are all children of the same God, members of the great family of man. And our religions have a special role to fulfil in curbing these evils and in forging bonds of trust and fellowship. God's will is that those who worship him, even if not *united in the same worship, would nevertheless be united in brotherhood and in common service* for the good of all.

4. Our presence together today - Hindus, Muslims and Christian gathered in friendship - is a *hopeful sign in a pluralistic world* filled with tensions. No religious group can afford to live and act in isolation. While respecting one another's convictions, we need each other's help. In the Holy Bible, Saint Paul encourages us to seek the ways of brotherhood and unity: "Agree with one another", he says, "live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you" (2 Cor. 13, 11). The challenge that is ours today is to help the world to live in peace and harmony, with respect for the human dignity of all. In this effort the God of love and peace will be with us.

May God's blessings be upon all of you!

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