



# The Holy See

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APOSTOLIC JOURNEY  
OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II  
TO CAMEROON, SOUTH AFRICA AND KENYA

WELCOMING CEREMONY

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II***

*Jomo Kenyatta International Airport of Nairobi (Kenya)  
Monday, 18 September 1995*

*Your Excellency, Mr President,  
and Members of the Government,  
Dear Cardinal Otunga and my Brother Bishops,  
Dear People of Kenya,*

1. I give thanks to Almighty God in whose wonderful Providence I am able to return for the third time to beautiful Kenya. I thank you, Mr President, for your kind words of welcome. I greet the civil authorities whose presence I see as a sign of friendship and of our shared desire to serve the well-being of all Kenyans. With heartfelt esteem, I greet the whole nation: all its peoples in the rich variety of their origin and culture. With gratitude for the warmth of your traditional hospitality, I say: *Wananchi wote, wananchi wote wapenzi. (Dear people, my dearest people!)*

2. My present journey through Africa is a celebration of the *Special Session for Africa of the Synod of Bishops*. That important meeting re-affirmed the commitment of the Catholic Church to her spiritual and humanitarian mission on this Continent. As the universal Pastor of the Catholic Church I wished to come to Africa at this time in order to urge my brothers and sisters in the faith to stand steadfast in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and to assume with unflinching generosity the challenge which the Synod proposes: a new evangelization, in a fresh spirit of service to the peoples of this Continent. It is my special joy therefore to greet Cardinal Otunga and my brother

Bishops of Kenya, as well as the representatives of the Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa. I especially look forward to joining the clergy, religious and laity in the most sacred act of our worship, the celebration of the Holy Eucharist.

3. Nimakuja kama rafiki wa nchi ya Kenya ambaye yuko nanyi katika shida na mafanikio bila ubaguzi wa aina yoyote.

*(I come as a friend of Kenya: as one who is close to the aspirations, trials and successes of all Kenyans, without distinction).*

In fulfilling her spiritual mission, the Church fosters and defends the dignity, freedom and advancement of the human person. She does so concretely through her many schools and educational projects, through her charitable, health-care and social institutions, through all her efforts to promote social progress. The *Church in Kenya*, under the leadership of the Bishops, has *a solid history of service to the common good*, and I am certain that for the benefit of the nation everyone will wish to increase the level of mutual trust and co-operation.

4. Dear Friends, I am fully conscious of the importance which Kenya, and Nairobi in particular, have as a centre of trade, communications, education and culture, and as the location of many international organizations and agencies for all of Africa. I come as one who is deeply concerned for the destiny of Africa's peoples. *Africa is at a crossroads*. Its peoples and their leaders are being called to exercise all their wisdom in the difficult and urgent task of promoting a development which is not just economic and material, but involves building a civilization of respect for all of society's members – for their rights and freedoms, as well as for the spiritual nature of every person; a civilization founded on the best traditions of this Continent, which emphasize people over things; a civilization which nurtures understanding, harmony and co-operation, not divisive tendencies. Social unity and solidarity are not easy at the best of times. They are made all the more difficult when ethnic, political and social divisions are allowed to smother the yearning for true peace which lies in peoples' hearts.

The Church is an ally of all who work for a better Africa. She will continue to teach the ways of harmony and peace, for the Gospel says: "Blessed are the peacemakers" (cf. Mt. 5:9). She will do all she can to defend the poor, the weak and those who are without voice, for "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for what is right" (*Ibid.*, 5:6). The Synod for Africa, which I am here to celebrate, is a providential gift to the Church and to the whole of African society. The Synod calls the Church to strengthen in all Africans the hope of genuine liberation. Our confidence that this is possible is based on God's promise, which assures us that our present history is not closed in upon itself but is open to God's transforming grace and love (cf. John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 14).

Nawaombea baraka za Mungu, Pia kuwashukuru sana Kwa makaribisho yenu mazuri.

*(Invoking his abundant blessings upon you all, I thank you for your gracious welcome.)*

I'm very, very grateful for this wonderful reception; it is heartfelt, very cordial. Thank you very much.