



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF PAUL VI
TO THE MISSIONARY PRIESTS
AND SISTERS FROM NIGERIA***

Friday, 6 February 1970

Beloved Missionary Priests and Sisters,

the grace and the peace of God our Father, and of Our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

We are most happy to receive you in Our home. It was only natural that your short stay in Rome should close with this meeting, which We have all desired.

You desired it, as devoted children like to see their beloved Father again. Even more ardently did We desire it, that We might listen to you, thank you for what you have done for the Kingdom of God, inspire you with renewed confidence, and thus restore serenity to your minds.

We are therefore grateful to you for having come, and together with you we give thanks to the Lord for the news you bring Us concerning Nigeria, a land We love so dearly. This news confirms Us in Our hope of the restoration of normal life in the areas which have suffered most in the sorrowful conflict now ended; and this recovery is due to the immediate intervention of the Federal Government, which has taken effective steps to banish the spirit of revenge.

There have been, We feel certain, advances towards that complete reconciliation of minds which will make the Nigerian Federation truly great and prosperous.

You have come here without recriminations, indeed with deep love for the country you have left, where you did your duty as missionaries. You have come with a hidden hope which We seem to see in the serenity of your faces, the hope, perhaps, of one day returning to where you have left your hearts.

We hope it will be so, and We trust that the good will of the Federal Authorities will at the opportune time bring this hope to realization.

Meanwhile other confreres of yours, especially the zealous and self-sacrificing Nigerian clergy, will fill the posts which you have left vacant. We wish to send them at this moment Our greeting and Our blessing, certain that they will redouble their apostolic activity in order to give adequate assistance to their flourishing Catholic communities.

An Apostle goes from one place to another with his gaze ever directed forward. You too, beloved sons and daughters, must have this disposition of mind. The Church continues to count on your ministry and on the generosity of your missionary enthusiasm. This is only a passing phase in your lives. It will also be a time for physical and spiritual repose, one in which you can “rest a while” as Our Lord invited His Apostles to do. Thus you will be able to restore your strength in the houses of your congregations and among your families.

Take with you to all your dear ones Our loving Benediction, which We bestow on you with paternal affection, as a pledge of divine favour and comfort.