

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO NIGERIA, BENIN
GABON AND EQUATORIAL GUINEA

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. Mr ISAAC JEMIDE SAGAY
AMBASSADOR OF NIGERIA TO THE HOLY SEE**

1 February 1982

Mr Ambassador,

It is a pleasure to accept the Letters of Credence appointing Your Excellency as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of your country to the Holy See. I warmly welcome you to this new assignment, and while expressing my gratitude for the kind greetings you have conveyed on behalf of the President of Nigeria, I would ask you to reciprocate his cordial good wishes.

Diplomatic relations between the Holy See and Nigeria are a sign of mutual understanding and respect; at the same time they are a pledge of our common desire to work together in friendly collaboration for the betterment of the human person and of society. The Holy See and your nation, each in its own specific field of responsibility, strive to promote the spiritual, moral and cultural elevation of men and women and of the families and communities of which they are a part.

Your presence here today bears witness to your Government's intention to work in harmony with the Holy See. Similarly the Holy See and the Catholic Church in Nigeria more specifically want to contribute to securing a better future for your country. Just as Jesus of Nazareth was a man "who went about doing good", so also the followers of Christ seek to excel in works of charity and justice in their relationships with all their fellow citizens, regardless of creed or any other social distinction. To illustrate this point, permit me to make reference to the educational institutions of the Church in Nigeria. Among other goals, these institutions seek to assist every person in developing his or her unique capabilities and talents, so that each one, having received a solid formation in the various fields of study, may, as a good citizen, contribute to the welfare and further development of the community. They are at the service of the parents, to help them in the exercise of their right to choose the type of education they wish to give their children, in accordance with their moral and religious principles.

In several weeks, I shall have the great joy of visiting the beloved people of Nigeria. I look forward to this pastoral pilgrimage with great anticipation. It will be an occasion of meeting many of my brothers and sisters in Christ, and of uniting with them to praise and glorify the name of God, our Creator and Redeemer. It will afford me the opportunity to greet the members of other religions, especially those of the Moslem faith, whom the Catholic Church holds in high esteem. I look forward to meeting His Excellency Alhaji Shehu Shagari, the President of Nigeria, together with the other leaders of your nation. I pray that this journey of friendship and faith will deepen the bonds of understanding and brotherhood which already unite us.

I wish Your Excellency success in the new mission which you are undertaking and, for its accomplishment, you may be assured of all necessary assistance on the part of the Holy See.

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. Mr PETER DINGISWAYO ZUZE
AMBASSADOR OF ZAMBIA TO THE HOLY SEE**

8 February 1982

It gives me pleasure today to welcome Your Excellency and to accept your Letters of Credence as Ambassador of the Republic of Zambia to the Holy See. I appreciate the kind words of greeting that you have just spoken on behalf of the citizens of your nation and I am grateful for your solicitude with regard to my well-being. In particular I take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to all the many countrymen of yours who prayed for me during the period of my recovery.

The theme of peace that you have presented is a concern that directly affects the stability not only of individual nations such as your own, but the world community as a whole. In fidelity to her mission of bringing the message of salvation to all peoples, the Catholic Church has a keen interest in the promotion of all that ensures the inherent dignity of every person. The establishment of true peace is essential for preserving and advancing that dignity.

Peace, as we are all aware, is not merely the absence of war. Rather, in its fullest meaning, peace points to the deepest desire that is found in the heart of every human being. Peace challenges that which is noblest in man. In this regard I stated in this year's Message for the World Day of Peace that peace "springs from the dynamism of free wills guided by reason towards the common good that is to be attained in truth, justice and love".

From this it is clear that peace must necessarily involve more than a consideration of material or economic values. It requires values of the spiritual realm as well. In fact, the pre-eminence of spiritual values must be acknowledged, in order to ensure that material development and economic growth serve the authentic destiny of the whole person. For this reason the unimpeded access to truth, the equitable distribution of the riches of creation, and the right of acceptance in society without discrimination on the basis of origin, race, sex, nationality, religion, political convictions and the like must be upheld and defended as essential elements, in building a lasting peace.

On the other hand, wherever selfishness, greed or exploitation are allowed to exist, by law or by custom, there human suffering will be most intensely experienced and the way to peace most severely blocked. These situations will only be overcome by a willingness to communicate, to understand the condition of those who are being manipulated and by a readiness to forgive the wrongs of the past in favour of a common search for future harmony.

Mr Ambassador, it gives me great hope to hear you reiterate the commitment of the people of Zambia to the quest for peace in the world. May God bless every effort in the pursuit of this goal.

I extend to Your Excellency my good wishes for success in the work that has been entrusted to you by His Excellency the President of the Republic. I assure you of the cooperation and assistance of the Holy See in your efforts, as well as my own prayers for yourself and for all the beloved sons and daughters of Zambia.

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
AT THE ARRIVAL IN AFRICA**

Lagos (Nigeria), 12 February 1982

*Mr President,
Your Eminence Cardinal Ekandem,
my brother bishops,
respected Government leaders,
esteemed dignitaries and all you people of Nigeria,*

I am happy to set foot on your beloved land. For a long time I have wanted to pay you this visit, and now this desire of my heart is being fulfilled. For me this is a moment of great joy; before me there unfolds a vision of hope.

1. I have come in order to meet people of different religious persuasions – both individuals and communities – and I earnestly hope that my presence among you will express the love and respect that I have for all of you, as well as my esteem for the worthy religious values that you cherish. I wish to show fraternal solidarity with all the people of this nation, who through their Constitution have firmly and solemnly resolved to live, under God, in unity and harmony, and to work for the welfare of all. It is my desire to pay tribute to Nigeria's contribution to justice, peace and development in Africa and beyond, and to support all efforts under way to build a society ever more fraternal and humane.

2. To the Catholics I say: I come to you in the name of Jesus Christ, on a visit that is pastoral in nature. I come to meet you, to listen to you, to celebrate the Holy Eucharist with you and for you. I come to proclaim Jesus Christ in your midst and to strengthen you in your faith and in your love for God and for all your brothers and sisters. I come to support my brother bishops and priests in the work of evangelization and in their generous service to humanity.

3. I address my words of friendship to all sectors of the national community. In particular my thoughts and affection go out to the sick, the old and the handicapped, and to all who are experiencing the burdens of suffering and sorrow. I hope to be able to be close to you, in order to comfort you. I look forward to the opportunity to encourage and challenge the youth, and to honour all the citizens of Nigeria. I am deeply grateful to you for inviting me to be your guest and I ask God to reward you for this warm reception. May God grant to all of us days of joyful encounter, celebration and prayer.

May the Almighty and Merciful God bestow on Nigeria every blessing of true prosperity and peace. God bless Nigeria!

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PRESIDENT AND THE MEMBERS
OF GOVERNMENT OF NIGERIA**

Lagos, 12 February 1982

Mr President,

1. I am deeply grateful for the kind words that you have addressed to me and by which you offer, in the name of all the citizens of Nigeria, a warm welcome to your country. You will allow me to express the feelings that fill my heart at this moment by quoting from your own poem “Wakar Nigeriya”: “And thank God that he placed us among the people of Nigeria”! These words, which so many of your fellow citizens have recited, can now aptly describe the firm bond between the whole nation and myself. Like you, I want to thank Almighty God for letting me be in Nigeria today and for giving me this longed-for visit to the people of this great nation.

I also thank you, Mr President, for the kind invitation which you extended to me. That, in doing so, you spoke for the whole of Nigeria has already been made manifest by the enthusiastic welcome while I am receiving from the people. I would ask you, today even more than before, to consider me one of your own, for indeed I come to this land as a friend and a brother to all its inhabitants.

2. On this my second visit to Africa, I wish to stress the essentially religious character of my journey, which begins most fittingly in Nigeria. I come to confirm my brother Bishop – who also extended to me a cordial invitation – in their pastoral endeavours; I come to share with my Catholic brethren moments of prayer and of common celebration. I come to confess with other fellow Christians and with my brothers and sisters of other faiths our common belief in the goodness and mercy of Almighty God. My message is one of peace and love, of brotherhood and faith. Of faith in God, certainly, but also of faith in humanity, of confidence in the marvellous possibilities of every man, woman and child.

And so, my meeting here with you, Mr President and Government leaders, is more than the observance of a mere practice of courtesy which makes it possible to thank one’s hosts, as they deserve, for their generous hospitality and for the good will shown in the face of the exacting demands of the organization of this visit by all those in authority. I also attach great importance to the opportunity which is offered me for exchanging views with those who hold civil power, on our common concerns for humanity. In their own fields, the political community and the Church are autonomous and independent, but their common concern for man brings them together and invites them to collaboration for the welfare of all.

3. It is therefore fitting for me to express to you, Mr President, and to the Government Leaders, and indeed to all the people of this great country my deep appreciation of what the Nigerian people have achieved, not always without suffering and sacrifice, since their independence over two decades ago. I experience a deep joy in seeing how Nigeria, together with numerous other African nations, has acceded to full national sovereignty and is able to take its future in its own hands, according to the richness of its own genius, in respect for its own culture, and in consonance with its own sense of God and of spiritual values. It is my conviction that all Africa, when allowed to take charge of its own affairs, without being subjected to interference and pressure from any outside powers or groups, will not only astound the rest of the world by its achievements, but will be able to share its wisdom, its sense of life, its reverence for God with other continents and nations, thus establishing that exchange and that partnership in mutual respect that is needed for the true progress of all humanity.

4. I therefore desire to pay homage to the significant contribution which the Nigerian nation has made and is making in the first place to the African continent. You forcefully stand up for political freedom and for the right of all place to the African continent. You spare no efforts to help remove all discrimination against people because of their colour, race, language or social status. You have offered help to countries in greater need and you champion brotherly relations and economic collaboration between African nations. Nigeria is looked to, to lead the way in promoting a magnanimous policy of receiving and assisting refugees and helping them to resettle through humane repatriation or by programmes bettering their lot. And you have given other countries an example of how to reconcile when brothers have had serious misunderstandings. In consolidating national unity within your own nation, you are strengthening the unity of Africa; in turn this activity constitutes the cornerstone of Nigeria's commitment to Africa and to the world. By acting collectively in the framework of an all-African collaboration, you are not only contributing to making Africa's voice increasingly heard in the comity of nations, but you are effectively promoting international solidarity among all the peoples of the world.

5. Nigeria has been blessed by the Creator with a rich human potential and with natural wealth. Such gifts, received in humble gratefulness, are also a constant challenge, for the goods of this world are given by the Creator for the benefit of all. Public authorities are entrusted with the sacred assignment to channel these riches to the best interests of the people, that is, for the betterment of all and for the future of all. There is likewise need to protect the land, sea, water and air from pollution and the ravages of industrial development, precisely in order to protect the dignity and dominion of man. I have also been informed, Mr President, that your Federal Government and the State authorities place high priority on housing, agriculture, education and social services.

May these splendid objectives truly redound to the good of countless individuals and of society as a whole. I wholeheartedly encourage all those entrusted with the well-being of their fellowman to make the human person the true criterion of all development efforts. Development projects must always have a human face. They cannot be reduced to a purely materialistic or economic endeavour. The human person must always be the ultimate measure of the feasibility and the success of an economic or social programme. Progress can therefore not be separated from the dignity of the human person nor from the respect for his or her fundamental rights. In the pursuit of progress, total progress, anything must be rejected that is unworthy of the freedom and the human rights of the individual and of the people as a whole. Thus are rejected such elements as corruption, bribery, embezzlement of public funds, domination over the weak, callousness towards the poor and handicapped. Participation in the political life of the country, freedom of religion, of speech, of association, the protection of a well functioning judiciary system, respect for and promotion of things spiritual and cultural, love of truth: these are the ingredients for progress that is truly and fully human. I have no doubt that the authorities and the people of Nigeria are fully aware of these challenges and values. I trust that they will always work together in the pursuit of the true economic and social development of the country, intimately linked to the question of human dignity.

6. Mr President, yours is a land of promise, a land of hope. In its efforts to develop, it is bound also to suffer the pressures that so often arise from conflicting demands and from the sheer magnitude of the task. Among the problems that invest the developing world is a disproportionate urbanization that can create slum conditions, place the disinherited and the less fortunate on the margin of society, and link want and poverty to crime and to the loss of moral values. Only the united efforts of all the citizens under enlightened leadership can

overcome difficulties such as this. Only the harnessing of all the forces for the common good, in true respect of the supreme values of the spirit, will make a nation great and a happy dwelling place for its people. The glory of the Government is the well-being, the peace and the joy of the governed. This is the vision of hope that I share with you today. This is my wish for you, Mr President, for you, respected Government leaders. This is my prayer for all of you, beloved people of Nigeria. This is my prayer to the Almighty and Merciful God.

***ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF NIGERIA***

Onitsha (Nigeria), 13 February 1982

Dear young men and women of Nigeria,

This afternoon the Pope belongs to you!

I am truly overjoyed to see you here in your teeming thousands from all parts of your vast country.

You have displayed for me your youthful agility, your fascinating acrobatics, your joy and your optimism. I am very grateful to you; I am very happy to be with you. Long before we met, you were in my thoughts and prayers. And now the time has come for a personal encounter. Permit me to share some thoughts with you.

1. Youth is the age of hope, of promise, of enthusiasm, of plans and of ideals. Youth does not want to give up in the face of difficulties. Youth does not want to put up with the shortcomings of the status quo. Youth believes in a better world and is determined to do something to help bring it about.

You must be known for your generosity and openness to others. You must be grateful to your parents. You will love them, respect them, help them, and obey them. You will accept your teachers, respect them and follow their instructions. You will be known for self-sacrifice, diligence at your studies or work, and efficiency in your assigned duties. You will sacrifice yourselves in Catholic lay apostolate organizations in order to bear witness to Christ. You must be a dedicated laity zealously pursuing your mission to communicate Christ. Some of you will be called to become priests, brothers or sisters, with a special role of service in the Kingdom of God.

2. My beloved young people of Nigeria, you must be outstanding for discipline, strength of character and reliability. This will show itself in several ways. You will be chaste. You will resist all temptations which attack the sanctity of your body. You will bring your chastity to the priesthood, religious life or marriage. You will have many opportunities to express discipline through Christian temperance. The attractions and pressures of the world often lure young people into self-indulgence or escapism. Temptations to the excesses of drink and to drug abuse are all around you.

Will-power reinforced by humble prayer is essential to anyone who is trying to act in a fully human way.

3. It is a major decision for you to choose a permanent state of life. For most of you it will be marriage. But for many of you it may be the priesthood, the brotherhood or the sisterhood. You will need the advice of your priests, your parents and your teachers. You will need God's guidance. Pray. Rely on Christ. Open your hearts to him. Open your hearts wide to Christ. Do not be afraid. Be generous. The one who gives sparingly will reap sparingly. The one who gives with generosity will reap an abundant harvest. You can count on God's grace.

4. A good Christian is a good citizen. You must love your country, obey its laws, respect your leaders, and pay your taxes. You are called to take your due part in political, social, economic and cultural affairs. When you are eligible, you should vote and be voted for in political elections.

I wish to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the national programme of youth service. I commend the young men and women who generously give of themselves for this period of service outside their state of origin, forging new bonds of friendship and strengthening fraternal solidarity and national unity. At the same time I am grateful for the consideration given to priests and religious, whose assignments must not conflict with their priestly and religious status.

5. As young people, you should constantly strive to identify the ills of your society, such as bribery and corruption, the embezzlement of government or company funds, extravagant and unproductive spending, the parade of wealth, neglect of the poor and the friendless, nepotism, tribalism, political antagonism, denial of the rights of the poor, abortion, contraception and other evils which also ravage other countries. As true youth you will see, judge and then act according to the criteria of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

6. In all things, you will radiate joy, peace, brotherliness, optimism and the hope of a better Nigeria. This is your contribution as Christians; this is what you learn from the Lord. This is the challenge of his word, which must take root in your lives and bear fruit. Remember how Jesus challenges you over and over again in the Gospels: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God..."

I wish to show my appreciation of the many forms of organized Catholic youth apostolate at the various levels (national, diocesan, parish and station). I praise the many associations through which you fulfil your commitment to the lay apostolate and reaffirm your desire to serve humanity in the name of Christ. I pay tribute to your priest chaplains who help you so much, and also to the religious brothers and sisters and to the laypeople who help to make your organizations a vital expression of the life of the Church.

7. Young people of Nigeria, I have come to encourage you in the great mission you have to help build a better world, to advance Christ's Kingdom of truth and life, of holiness and grace, of justice, love and peace. It is to him that I wish to direct your gaze. As was said to the early Christians: "Let us not lose sight of Jesus, who leads us in our faith and brings it to perfection". In his name – in the holy name of Jesus, the Saviour of the world, the Redeemer of man, the friend of youth – I want to express to you those sentiments that I have shared with young men and women throughout the world: Young people of Nigeria, you have an incomparable dignity as children of God, as brothers and sisters of Christ.

Young people of Nigeria, Christ died for you, to redeem you. Christ loves you and I love you too!

Young people of Nigeria, “let us love one another, since love comes from God”.

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE SICK AND THE OLD
GATHERED IN SAINT CHARLES BORROMEO HOSPITAL**

Onitsha (Nigeria), 13 February 1982

Dear friends,

I am happy to be with you this afternoon, you, the sick and the old. You are precious in the eyes of God. Your lives have a deep meaning for society and for me. -My joy is all the greater because I am meeting you in this famous hospital called after Saint Charles Borromeo, whose name was given to me by my parents at Baptism. My predecessor Paul VI visited this place in 1962 when it was at the building stage, and he contributed to its construction. I can see the loving gesture of the Church in Onitsha in naming this hospital after Saint Charles Borromeo, the apostle of Milan and the patron of your first Archbishop of Onitsha, Charles Heerey, C. S. Sp., who departed this life in 1967.

1. As long as we are on our earthly pilgrimage, suffering and sickness will exist. They are a part of our human condition, and ultimately they are the results of original sin, but they are not necessarily the fault of the individual. There are many people of different ages who suffer through no fault of their own. Children, in particular, are vulnerable to suffering, often caused by the thoughtlessness or negligence of adults. The reality of sickness and malnutrition in the lives of millions of children is a fact that calls for attention and action. And the condition of the retarded child makes us think about the very meaning of human life. Old age too brings its own difficulties and physical weakness.

2. Although God allows suffering to exist in the world, he does not enjoy it. Indeed, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man, loved the sick; he devoted a great part of his earthly ministry to healing the sick and comforting the afflicted. Our God is a God of compassion and consolation.

And he expects us to take the ordinary means to prevent, relieve and remove suffering and sickness. Therefore we have preventive health care programmes; we have doctors, nurses, paramedics and medical institutions of many kinds. Medical science has made much progress.

We should take advantage of all this.

3. But even after all these efforts, suffering and sickness still exist. A Christian sees meaning in suffering. He bears such suffering with patience, love of God, and generosity. He offers it all to God, through Christ, especially during the Sacrifice of the Mass. When the sick person receives Holy Communion he unites himself with Christ the Victim. When suffering is associated with Christ's Passion and redemptive death, then it has great value for the

individual, for the Church and for society. This is the meaning of those wonderful words of Saint Paul on which we must meditate over and over again: “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the Church”.

I also know personally what it means to be sick and to stay in hospital for a long time, and how it is possible to comfort and support others who share the same lot of confinement and suffering, and how necessary it is to pray for the sick and to show them one’s loving concern. In this connection, I am happy to note that you have in this hospital a beautiful chapel with the Blessed Sacrament reserved, and that there is a resident chaplain. Jesus himself wants to be your consolation and strength, through his Eucharistic presence and through the ministry of his priests.

4. You who are advanced in age are senior citizens. You have borne the heat of the day in life’s struggle and have gathered much knowledge, wisdom and experience. Please share these generously with the younger generation. You have something very important to offer to the world; and your contribution is purified and enriched through the patience and love that are yours, when you are united with Christ. Old age slows down the body and brings weakness and sometimes sickness. Our response includes medical attention and Christian patience. In union with Christ you are called to thank God the Father for having given you human life and for having called you to live both in this world and for ever in union with Christ.

5. In Nigeria you have the beautiful cultural value of the extended family system. The sick and the old are not abandoned by their children, their nephews and nieces, their cousins or other kindred.

The wide umbrella of charity has a roof for all. This is a precious heritage that must be maintained.

This ideal is under pressure, especially in the cities and towns, where the old are sometimes cut off from the extended family. The abandonment and solitude of the old results when a great cultural value has been taken away and has been replaced by something totally un-African.

6. To the doctors, the nurses, the paramedicals and all others who care for the sick in Nigeria, not forgetting the various medical and nursing councils, professional and administrative, I express my esteem and gratitude. Your humanitarian concern is worthy of great praise. Your Christian charity merits everlasting life. Jesus himself made concern for the sick something on which our judgment and eternal reward depend: “Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for... I was sick and you visited me”.

***ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PRIESTS AND SEMINARIANS OF NIGERIA***

Enugu (Nigeria), 13 February 1982

*Dear brother priests,
my dear seminarians,*

“May the peace of Christ reign in your hearts”.

I am particularly happy to meet you today, priests and seminarians of Nigeria. You are called to be the immediate co-workers of your bishops. On you, to a large extent, depends the work of evangelization in this land. Permit me to share with you some thoughts on the sacred ministry of the priesthood.

1. The priest is sent by Christ and his Church to proclaim the Gospel of salvation, above all in the celebration of the Eucharist. The priest is ordained to offer the Sacrifice of the Mass, and thus to renew the Paschal Mystery of our Lord Jesus Christ. As a minister of Christ, the priest is called to sanctify the People of God by word and sacrament. He shares the pastoral solicitude of the Good Shepherd, which is frequently expressed in prayer for the flock. As priests, you and I are called to preach and teach the word of God with clarity, lively faith and personal commitment, with orthodoxy, and love. We are called to gather the People of God together, to build the Body of the Church. In accordance with the will of Christ, the priest carries out his apostolate under the leadership of his bishop and in union with his brother priests.

2. Your young Church in Nigeria is full of life and vigour. With apostolic dynamism your missionary priests laid strong foundations through prayer, diligence, chastity and dedication in charity. The local priests and bishops have taken up the mission and consolidated it. Right now you have many initiatives under way to make the Church more and more at home in your culture. I praise you for the harmony with which the Nigerian diocesan priests, the missionary priests and the Nigerian religious priests work together to advance the Kingdom of Christ.

3. I understand well that most of you are grossly overworked. Some of you parish priests have ten thousand Catholics to serve; some of you may have even many more. There may even be fifteen outstations to a single priest. Most of you celebrate two or three Masses every Sunday in distant places, teach Christian doctrine, and give Eucharistic Benediction.

Your people flock to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. You patiently and lovingly discharge this ministry. I understand that in some places all the priests in neighbouring parishes join in a cooperative effort to make this sacrament available. You do this by going together in groups of ten to twenty to your various neighbouring parishes during such peak confession seasons as Christmas and Easter. This, my dear brothers in the priesthood, is an excellent way to fulfil Christ's will to serve his people. You thereby give your parishioners a good choice of confessors and you bear a silent witness to the one priesthood of Christ and to your fraternal solidarity. The Pope rejoices because of your fidelity to this extremely important sacramental ministry, in which Christ's forgiving and healing power touches human hearts.

4. You also pay great attention to the preparation of candidates for the other sacraments and to the general promotion of catechetics. You animate and coordinate the work of catechists, Catholic teachers and other teachers of religion. Your Bishops' Conference has recently emphasized the importance of the catechumenate and has issued directives and letters for the proper carrying out of the sacraments of initiation. Praised be Jesus Christ, who through you and your catechists continues to provide for the deeper rooting of the Church in the power of God's word.

5. I wish to express my esteem of the apostolate of those priests who, in collaboration with their bishops, work at diocesan centres, pastoral and catechetical centres, junior and senior seminaries, in its social services, the Catholic Secretariat in Lagos, schools, colleges, universities, the mass media, mission assignments outside the diocese, both inside and outside and outside of Nigeria, and all such tasks. These priests are serving Christ in vital areas too. The Church needs their particular contribution to her pastoral mission; the aim of all these activities is to evangelize, to communicate Christ.

6. God has blessed Nigeria with many junior and senior seminarians. Indeed your Bigard Memorial Seminary in Enugu and Ikot Ekpene is one of the largest in the world. Your seminary professors have distinguished themselves by their zealous desire to teach the word of God and by sheer hard work. May the Lord reward all those – the laity, religious, priests and bishops – who make this possible. May he bless the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples which gives you moral, financial and technical support.

The high number of your seminarians must never be used as a reason for accepting a lower quality of performance. Of first importance in the seminary must be friendship with Christ centred on the Eucharist and nurtured especially by prayer and meditation on the word of God. This friendship with Christ is authentically expressed in sacrifice, love of neighbour, chastity and apostolic zeal. It likewise demands fidelity to studies and a certain detachment from the things of this world. More spiritual directors are needed for your seminarians. A priest appointed to serve in a seminary should rejoice when this special assignment is given to him. He should strive by word and example to present to the seminarians the highest ideals of the priesthood. What a great privilege it is to help lead young men to a greater knowledge and love of Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd. Seminarians who are really unsuitable for ordination should be firmly and charitably advised to follow another vocation.

7. No priest can carry out his ministry well unless he lives in union with Christ. His life, like Christ's, must be marked by self-sacrifice, zeal for the spreading of the Kingdom of God, unblemished chastity, unstained charity. All this is possible only when the priest is a man of prayer and Eucharistic devotion. By praying the Liturgy of the Hours in union with the Church he will find strength and joy for the apostolate. In silent prayer before the Blessed Sacrament he will be constantly renewed in his consecration to Jesus Christ and confirmed in his permanent commitment to priestly celibacy. By invoking Mary the Mother of Jesus, the priest will be sustained in his generous service to all Christ's brothers and sisters in the world. Yes, the priest must not allow the passing needs of the active apostolate to elbow out or eat into his prayer life. He must not be so engrossed with working for God that he is in danger of forgetting God himself. He will remember that our Saviour warned us that without him we can do nothing. Without him, we can fish all night and still catch nothing.

8. No priest can work all by himself. He works with his brother priests and under the leadership of the bishop, who is their father, brother, co-worker and friend. The authentic priest will maintain the love and unity of the presbyterium. He will reverence and obey his bishop as he solemnly promised on ordination day. The presbyterium of the bishop with all his priests, diocesan and religious, should function as a family, as an apostolic team marked with joy, mutual understanding and fraternal love. The presbyterium exists so that, through the renewal of Christ's Sacrifice, the mystery of Christ's saving love may enter the lives of God's people. Priests must not forget to help their brother priests who are in difficulty: moral, spiritual, financial or otherwise. And the sick and the old priests find in your warmth of brotherly charity both solace and support.

9. No state of life escapes temptations and you will try to identify your own. By God's grace and with persevering effort, you must strive to resist whatever temptation may come your way: whether, for example, to laxity in discipline, or to laziness, instability, unavailability, too much travelling or dissipation of apostolic energy. Relying on grace, you will reject temptations against celibacy by watchfulness, prayer and mortification. You will refuse to be captured by the attraction of material things and will not put your joy in money, big cars, and a high position in society. Party politics are not for you. It is the proper area of the lay apostolate. Rather you are the chaplains of the laity, who in political matters should assume their own distinctive role. In strengthening you against temptation the Sacrament of Penance has great importance for every priest. Here, for our own lives, we ministers of reconciliation find Christ's healing and sustaining action, his forgiving and merciful love.

10. Nigerians love to study. This is good. Learned priests are required in order to answer the needs of Church and society. Every priest should continue to improve himself by the private study of theology, catechetics and other such sacred sciences. Strive to make time for some such study frequently. When you are ordained and it is a question of going to universities or similar institutes inside or outside Nigeria, this is an assignment to be given only to a certain number of priests, according to diocesan needs and planning, for which the bishops take ultimate responsibility. Do nothing without your bishop, or worse still against him, especially on this point. Priests who have already put themselves into such irregular positions can now retrace their steps and find peace of conscience. In the same way, you will resist the temptation to seek employment anywhere without or against your bishop. We all share in Christ's one priesthood. Let us maintain its unity and love.

11. The priest must be a leaven in the Nigerian community of today. In a country in which many are over-concerned with making money, the priest by word and example must call attention to higher values. Man does not live by bread alone. The priest must identify with the poor, so as to be able to bring them the uplifting Gospel of Christ. Remember that Jesus applied these words to himself: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the Good News to the poor".

Since "evangelization would not be complete if it did not take account of the unceasing interplay of the Gospel and men's concrete life", the priest will be deeply concerned with bringing the light of the Gospel and the power of God's word to touch the many different issues of family life, fundamental human rights and duties, justice and peace, development and liberation, culture and learning. He will endeavour to make Christ and the Church present in the fields of the arts and science, culture and the professions. I am particularly happy about the inauguration of the Catholic Institute of West Africa in Port Harcourt, by the Bishops of Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Liberia and The Gambia, for the purpose of higher ecclesiastical studies.

The priests who work in the mass media have a wonderful opportunity to share Christ with others, as do the spiritual directors of the religious and laity, the chaplains of all lay apostolate organizations, and the priests who recruit vocations to the priesthood and the religious life. To all of you I say: "And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him".

Beloved priests and future priests of Nigeria, as Bishop of Rome and your brother priest, I bless you from my heart. I embrace each of you with deep affection in Christ Jesus – the one who is your only

Master and your closest friend, and who has loved each one of you with an everlasting love. I commend you all to Mary the Mother of Jesus, our great High Priest.

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE LAITY, CATECHISTS AND CATHOLIC WOMEN**

Kaduna (Nigeria), 14 February 1982

*Dear leaders of the laity in Nigeria,
dear catechists, dear Catholic women,*

I experience great joy in meeting you today. This encounter gives me the opportunity to speak to you about your respective contributions to the Gospel, as well as about your common vocation in the Church. All of you have been commissioned by Christ himself to have a share in the saving mission of his Church.

1. I appreciate the way in which you the laity of Nigeria work together with your bishops and priests in order to bear witness to Christ, in order to communicate Christ to others. This unity with the pastors of the Church is indeed an essential condition for the supernatural success of your efforts. Under their guidance you have the National Laity Council and the Catholic Women's Organization at all levels: national, provincial, diocesan, parochial and stational. There is much grassroots activity, and there are many worthy organizations. In all of this you are striving to activate the grace of your Baptism and your Confirmation.

Having been called by Christ himself, you are his chosen partners in evangelization. This leads you to share the Church's zeal to provide Catholic religious education for all Catholic-children in all types of educational institutions. You are truly aware of the mystery of the Church, that all of us who are baptized in Christ make up his Body, the Church. In this Church there is diversity of apostolate or ministry but oneness of mission: the spreading of the Kingdom of Christ. Bishops, priests, religious and laity – each group has its specific contribution to make.

2. As lay people you know that your special apostolate is to bring Christian principles to bear upon the temporal order, that is, to bring the spirit of Christ into such spheres of life as marriage and the family, trade and commerce, the arts and professions, politics and government, culture and national and international relations. In all these areas lay people must, in the expression of the Second Vatican Council, play their own distinctive role. From priest chaplains you receive the Word of God and sacramental strengthening. Fortified in this way, you enter into the arena of ordinary daily life and confess Christ there.

3. In society you are called to be a leaven for Christ: to witness to Christ in the school, in the Government office, in the company works, in the club gathering, in the town development union, in age grade meetings, in the university, in the market, in the trade union, and in politics. In all these secular spheres you will promote justice, unity, honesty, and public-spiritedness. Together you will seek Gospel-inspired and concrete answers to problems of bribery, corruption, lack of discipline, ethnicism and other such evils.

In your Church organizations you will be models of unity, discipline, hard work, loyalty to your leaders, forgetfulness of self, rejoicing when others have done well, not seeking fame but only the Kingdom of Christ, and not struggling for the first place in society, or wanting to be called master: "For you have one master, the Christ".

It is above all in the family that you will be able to communicate Christ. You will be exemplary husbands and wives, setting up a community of love and life, and exercising as fathers and mothers a real ministry in educating your children. It is through you that members are provided for the Body of Christ, and candidates for the priesthood and religious life. Nigeria looks to you with confidence to train good citizens for society.

4. As you engage in your numerous initiatives in the apostolate, you will place great importance on prayer and union with Christ. I am happy to know that your chaplains emphasize this, that you receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation often, that the Holy Eucharist is the centre of your Christian lives and of all your activities. Indeed, your evangelizing zeal comes above all from the Eucharist.

With God's grace, the days of recollection and the yearly retreats that you hold for spiritual rejuvenation can also help you to continue to grow in the faith which you have received.

5. I owe a special word of greeting to you, beloved catechists of Nigeria. Your role in initial and continuing evangelization is of such importance that I could not make a pilgrimage to Nigeria without this happy encounter with you.

From the very beginning when the first missionaries arrived in Nigeria more than a hundred years ago, you have been constant and indispensable partners of the priests. You assisted them at every turn. When they did not know the local languages, you acted as interpreters. You prepared people for the various sacraments. You baptized the dying when no priest was available. You animated the local Catholic community and led it in Sunday worship when there was no priest. You spearheaded most Church development projects. In all this you have abundantly contributed to the spreading of the Gospel.

6. Your special area of competence and dedication is catechetics, and its "twofold objective of maturing the initial faith and of educating the true disciple of Christ by means of a deeper and more systematic knowledge of the person and the message of our Lord Jesus Christ". You introduce neophytes to the faith, whether they are young, middle-aged, or old. You teach them Catholic doctrine, prayers and hymns. You help them to take part in the sacred liturgy, especially the Holy Eucharist.

You visit the sick on behalf of the whole Church. You make contact with non-Christians. You animate lay apostolate associations at grassroots level. You attend parish and diocesan meetings and help build bridges of understanding. You help the young to grow to Christian maturity by inspiring them to generosity and chastity. You discover likely candidates for the priesthood and religious life and bring them to the priest. Moreover, you facilitate people's contacts with the priests. Often you are able to be of special assistance when no priests can be found. For these and all such services, I express the gratitude of the universal Church.

My beloved catechists, the Church needs you. She continues to need you. No matter how many priests or religious the Church may have, you remain irreplaceable. You are nearest to your fellow laymen. You give them an idea of the Church at close quarters. You silently offer

them models to imitate. You show them that commitment to the faith and the sacrifice needed to spread it are possible for lay people and not only for clerics and religious.

7. I am happy to know that your dioceses have programmes for your in-service training, in such forms as yearly seminars for all catechists, deeper and longer formation courses for some, and even training for periods of years in catechetical institutes with more facilities than one diocese can afford. I thank you for your cooperation in all this. I thank your bishops and priests who make this possible. I also thank the National Directors of Religious Education who make a significant contribution.

Catechists of Nigeria, the Pope loves you. He trusts you, and he will always count on your help in the great work of evangelization. He blesses you in the name of Jesus.

8. I am also very happy to greet you, the leaders of the Catholic Women's Organization of Nigeria. Although I have met leaders of the National Laity Council in which you are also included, my special encounter with you is justified by the unique place which you occupy in the family, in the Church and in society.

You are convinced Catholic women, worthy wives and esteemed mothers. You have learned to love your husbands, care for your children, and spread your love to members of your extended family and to society as a whole. You are diligent in bringing up your children and in helping to prepare them for their vocation in life. In particular you educate them in charity and chastity, in generosity and discipline. These are truly vital roles.

I am informed that you are a well-organized, disciplined and effective group at the various levels. Your officers also take part in the World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations, the World President of which attended your National Convention at Onitsha last April. You organize leadership training courses, home-keeping seminars and Christian doctrine conferences. For all this I praise you.

9. You are particularly active in your various initiatives in favour of the family. You help to arrange and run marriage training centres for girls. You work in Diocesan Marriage Advisory Councils. You help families in difficulty. And you defend life at every stage, from the first moment of conception. I praise you in particular for your firm stand against abortion. Abortion is the murder of an innocent child. It has to be condemned by society. I also praise your efforts to help unmarried mothers and offer them an acceptable alternative to abortion. In all of this you mirror the human tenderness and the divine love of Jesus Christ.

Your struggle for the Catholic religious education of your own children and other children merits strong support. Religion is central in education. The Church must be involved in the education of the young. To do this, she needs your help.

Respected leaders of the Catholic Women's Organization of Nigeria, through you the Church is able to have a great impact on society. Through the many and varied activities that express "the fullness of true feminine humanity" you are able to work for the transformation of the world – to permeate all creation with the spirit of Christ.

10. All these and other initiatives, dear laity, catechists and Catholic women, depend on Christ for their fruitfulness. He – Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, the Son of the Virgin Mary – is the source of all your strength. The ultimate criterion of your dynamism is not to be found

in human ingenuity, or activity, or even organization. It is to be found in union with Jesus Christ, above all in Eucharistic worship. The real test of the Christian vitality of the village, the parish, the diocese and the nation is found in the answer to the question: What place does the Holy Eucharist have in your lives? For it is through sharing in the Paschal Mystery of his Death and Resurrection that Jesus makes us effective collaborators in spreading his Kingdom on earth. It is truly the Mass that matters. It is through the Eucharist that Christ guides our lives and builds our communities of love, understanding and mercy.

Today I ask our Blessed Mother Mary to unfold to all of you the Eucharistic mystery of her Son and to keep you for ever in her love.

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE MUSLIM RELIGIOUS LEADERS

Kaduna (Nigeria), 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.

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE RELIGIOUS MEN AND WOMEN

Ibadan (Nigeria), 15 February 1982

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

1. I am overjoyed to have this meeting with you, men and women of the different dioceses in Nigeria, who are living the religious life of consecration to Jesus Christ. Through your commitment of perfect charity you express the hope of the Church and become her crown and

glory. You are a comfort for her. You are ambassadors for her. This encounter could not be omitted.

Having been already consecrated to God by Baptism, you give special witness to Christ in the Church and in the world by your renunciation – for the sake of the Kingdom of heaven – of marriage, earthly possessions and the doing of your own will. Through your vows you make this sacrifice freely, out of love for God and your fellowman, in a spirit of dedication and service.

Consecrated chastity has great witness value in a world rampant with selfishness and the misuse of sex. In addition, in Nigeria and throughout Africa the sacrifice of fatherhood or motherhood is no small matter. Poverty calls people to give up attachment to money and what money can buy. And obedience swims against the world current of revolt, pride, vanity and oppression. As the Second Vatican Council says, the religious state is a proof that the Kingdom of Christ and its overmastering necessities are superior to all earthly considerations.

Even more important than the various works which you carry out is the life which you live: in other words, what you are. You are consecrated persons striving to follow Christ with great intensity of love.

2. Your love of God and union with him in prayer expresses itself in the activities of the apostolate.

In many ways you are called to collaborate in the cause of evangelization. Through a multiplicity of works you strive to communicate Christ and to offer service in his name. Through a whole network of ecclesial initiatives you pursue the definitive aim of catechesis: “to put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ”. Wherever a child is in need, wherever someone is suffering, wherever a brother or sister feels alone or rejected, the religious has the opportunity to work for the Kingdom of God. But prayer and union with God always remain the soul of your apostolate. Without Jesus we can do nothing.

3. I appreciate your efforts for the continuing theological and spiritual formation of your members, your initiative of post-novitiate training centres, the regular meetings of your major superiors, and the area meetings which involve every religious. Through such activities you are able to reflect more deeply on religious life, grow in an understanding of charity and the meaning of your mission, consolidate unity among yourselves and coordinate your apostolate. Having been refreshed and renewed in faith and love, you will be in a position to give yourselves with ever greater availability to the service of the local and the universal Church.

4. I wish to make a particular mention of religious brothers and to praise them and to encourage them. Your vocation, my dear brothers, is not an easy one, especially because the spirit of the world does not appreciate evangelical poverty and humble service. You are called to follow Christ in a life of total self-giving which does not generally bring public acclaim.

Many people cannot understand your vocation because they cannot grasp how Christ’s invitation, when accepted, can truly bring joy and deep fulfilment: “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me”. The Christ who emptied himself is your model and your strength. You yourselves, then, must never begin to doubt your own identity. Your understanding of your vocation, your transparent happiness and infectious peace, and your zealous commitment to your apostolate and to the good of the

people whom you serve are an eloquent witness to the power of Christ's grace and to the primacy of his love.

5. All religious, both brothers and sisters, must be aware that temptations will not spare them. Your three vows will sooner or later be tested in the crucible of problems, crises and dangers. Your intense love of Christ and his Church will teach you how to remain faithful. In particular, you will have to seek ever more authentic ways to live lives of evangelical poverty in a country in which the gap between the rich and the poor is widening all the time. In the Nigeria of today you are also expected to be a leaven in society through a spirit of humble service, exercised particularly among the poor. This type of consecrated service is the opposite of complacency, arrogance and privileged position.

In planning your apostolate and the professional training of your members, each congregation should take full account of the local Church or diocese. The diocese is a spiritual family of which the bishop is the father and head, and religious must avoid the temptation of running programmes parallel to those of the diocese. Rather the entire diocese – priests, religious and laity – should coordinate its apostolic plans and strategy and give corporate witness to Christ.

6. I wish to add a special word to the monks and cloistered nuns of Nigeria, because of the specific contribution which their way of life makes to the Church and the nation. You rightly place particular emphasis on divine worship, on prayer and contemplation. The Church herself ratifies your vocation because of her conviction that apostolic fruitfulness is a gift of God. By assiduous prayer you are associated with Jesus, who is "living for ever to intercede for all who come to God through him". United with Jesus in his intercession, you are thus able to obtain graces for the active apostolate and for the whole world. I personally rely on your help.

You live lives of real self-sacrifice. You thereby give to all Christians, and indeed to all people, a silent but eloquent testimony of God's sovereignty and of Christ's primacy in your lives. By the work of your hands and by your intellectual endeavours, you show the close relationship between work and prayer. At the same time you express your solidarity in work with all your brothers and sisters throughout the world.

Through monastic silence you help create an atmosphere for enabling people to listen to God and to receive his inspirations. It is no wonder that priests, religious and laity flock to your monasteries and convents for the sacred liturgy, prayer, spiritual retreats, recollection days, advice and even simply rest. In such ways you can help promote the maturity of your people in the Paschal Mystery of Christ's Death and Resurrection.

7. And to all of you, beloved religious of Nigeria, I wish to express my deep affection in Christ Jesus. I am very grateful to you for your lives of consecration and for all your generous service to the Church. I ask your continuing prayers for the intentions of the Apostolic See and for the needs of the universal Church. May our Blessed Mother Mary, our model of love for Jesus and of dedication to him, help you to live out faithfully your vocation of love and faith, of joy and hope.

For in the words of Saint Peter, without having seen Jesus "you love him; though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with unutterable and exalted joy". Dear brothers and sisters, "set your hope fully upon the grace that is coming to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ".

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE ORGANIZERS OF THE VISIT TO NIGERIA**

Lagos, 15 February 1982

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

1. Before I leave your shores I am indeed happy to have this meeting with you, representatives of the many who have organized this visit of mine to Nigeria.

For many months you have planned, revised your plans, held meetings in Rome, in Lagos, in your Provincial Centres, on the diocesan levels and at other venues. You have contacted the Government, various organizations, companies and individuals. The result is the beautifully orchestrated and smooth programme which is already in its fourth day.

I express to you my deep appreciation. Your many sacrifices have helped to strengthen faith, to increase charity and to cement friendships. You have contributed much to the life of the Church in Nigeria and to the happiness and well-being of so many of your fellow-citizens.

2. The arrangements you made have enabled me to exercise my own pastoral mission as a servant of Christ's Gospel and as the universal Shepherd of God's people. With your collaboration I have been able here in Nigeria to proclaim Christ, the Light of the world.

3. By working together you have reflected the unity of the Church; you have shown how greatly you value solidarity in action and how much you want to be, like the early Christians, "of one heart and soul". It is my hope that the pattern of collaboration and hard work that you have followed during the preparation of my visit will continue to inspire you in all your activities in your local Churches, and in the continued support that you are asked to give to your bishops and priests.

In the words of Saint Paul: I shall always be "thankful for your partnership in the Gospel... And I am sure that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Christ Jesus. It is right for me to feel thus about you all, because I hold you in my heart".

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE BISHOPS OF NIGERIA**

Lagos, 15 February 1982

My dear brother Bishops,

"Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord".

I am overjoyed to be with you today. Last month you were my guests at the Vatican, and during these days I am your guest. We understand each other. We love each other. We communicate freely. My brief tour of your vast country fills me with joy and hope. I regret that I am not able to visit more centres, but you know the reasons why the programme had to be limited. Everywhere you made excellent preparations. Your people are enthusiastic, hospitable, full of faith. They understand the immense treasury of grace that is theirs in our

Lord Jesus Christ. I praise his Father, who has given to your people deep insights of faith into things that have been hidden “from the learned and the clever”.

1. I praise you and express my fraternal solidarity with you in your day-to-day ministry, in the ecclesial reality in which you are pastors of the flock. You have done honour to the missionaries who began this good work a century ago.

Your seminaries are full, your religious congregations have a steady flow of candidates, and your lay apostolate organizations are dynamic. You love the one who presides in charity over the universal Church, as well as those who collaborate with him in the work of the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. You promote orthodox doctrine and approved liturgical practices, and you encourage priestly discipline. Clerical dress and the religious habit are held in honour in your country. You zealously exercise your teaching office by means of homilies, pastoral letters and other statements.

I am happy to know that your pastoral zeal is also expressed through the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, the National Missionary Seminary, the Catholic Institute of West Africa, the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar, and your collaboration with the Roman Curia and the World Synod of Bishops. For these and all the other manifestations of apostolic and pastoral love, I thank you in the name of Jesus Christ, the one whom all of us, with Peter, acknowledge as the “Chief Shepherd of the flock”.

In a big Bishops’ Conference such as yours, it is never superfluous to emphasize the importance of unity and concerted action. There are many needs of the apostolate in your nation which you cannot meet adequately unless you stand together and act together. Examples are the common projects which I have just mentioned. Added to these are your regional and interdiocesan seminaries, both junior and senior, your relationship with national and regional civil authorities, your pastoral planning and so forth. Problems too demand well-considered and united action: whatever lack of discipline may exist among some priests, the problem of tribalism or ethnicism, and such national problems as bribery and corruption, dishonesty and violence.

I am aware that the school apostolate has yielded very good results for evangelization in Nigeria, but that the situation of church schools has also created big problems, especially in the past fifteen years. The religious education of children, in school and out of school, is of the greatest importance.

In the various states of your vast Federation you are striving to fulfil your responsibility as bishops in providing for the rights and needs of so many Catholic children. Acting as spiritual leaders and vigilant pastors, and relying on the full support of your priests, religious and laity, you are trying to show the aims of Christian education and help parents to fulfil their God-given role as the primary educators of their children.

In this regard I would draw attention to what I wrote in my recent apostolic exhortation: “The right of parents to choose an education in conformity with their religious faith must be absolutely guaranteed. The State and Church. have the obligation to give families all possible aid to enable them to perform their educational role properly. Therefore both the Church and State must create and foster the institutions and activities that families justly demand, and the aid must be in proportion to the families’ needs. However, those in society who are in charge of schools must never forget that the parents have been appointed by God himself as the first

and principal educators of their children and that their right is completely inalienable". Yes, dear brothers in Christ, in all your pastoral zeal towards the laity and clergy I am close to you in the love of Jesus Christ.

I thank you for your missionary consciousness and for your initiative in sending Nigerian priests, brothers and sisters to a number of other countries in Africa and to the West Indies. I am grateful for the fraternity you show to your brother priests; it is indeed a wonderful practice to do annual spiritual exercises and monthly days of recollection with them. In all of this you show the oneness of the priesthood in the oneness of Christ's Church.

2. When the first group of you were in Rome last month I already had occasion to speak of my visit to Nigeria as an experience of our unity in Christ and in the Church. The unity that you live in your local Churches we are now experiencing together. This unity is a unity of faith based on the word of God, on the Gospel – a Gospel to be believed, to be lived, to be spread. For this reason I proposed unity and evangelization as the double setting of this pastoral visit of mine to the beloved Church in Nigeria.

Today in Lagos we are truly celebrating the word of God that unites us; we are celebrating the Incarnate Word of God, who died in order "to gather in unity the scattered children of God". We are celebrating the Gospel as "the power of God saving all who have faith". We recall how, through the grace of Christ and the merits of his precious blood, the word of God has taken root in your people's lives, has united them in communities of faith, and has continually brought forth fruits of justice unto salvation.

3. As we meditate on the dynamic process of evangelization that took place we realize that it must go on unceasingly. We realize that people will not believe in Christ "unless they have heard of him, and they will not hear of him unless they get a preacher, and they will not have a preacher unless one is sent". And so today, dear brothers in Christ, we reflect on the words of Jesus: "As the Father sent me, even so I send you".

I have been sent by Christ and you have been sent by Christ. And together with the rest of the College of Bishops throughout the world we are sent to announce Christ, to proclaim Christ, to communicate Christ and his Gospel to the world. This is why, in anticipation of this pastoral visit, I expressed the hope that it would initiate "a new era of evangelization". This is my repeated prayer: that zeal for evangelization will envelop the Church here in Nigeria. And why? Because evangelization constitutes the essential mission of the Church, it is her vocation, it is her deepest identity. In this, the Church, which is Christ's fullness, faithfully reflects the mission of Jesus, who says of himself: "I must proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God... because this is what I was sent to do".

In practice, the Church's vocation to evangelize means above all living the Gospel ever more deeply. It means accepting Christ's call to conversion and accepting the demands inherent in the faith preached by Jesus. The call to conversion was the theme of John the Baptist's preaching. It was the explicit proclamation of Jesus: "Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is close at hand". It was Peter's message for Pentecost: "You must repent".

Understood in this way, evangelization involves a process of purification and interior change that affects our local Churches. It means conversion unto salvation: the ecclesial community becoming ever more a community of living faith, a communion of prayer, a centre of charity radiating concern for the poor and the sick, the lonely, the abandoned, the handicapped, those

with leprosy, those who are weak in faith, those who need support and are looking for someone to show them the love of Christ.

Having herself embraced the Gospel, the Church is called to communicate it by word and action.

The Catholic people, under your pastoral leadership, have the opportunity, the privilege and the duty to give a corporate witness to the Gospel of Jesus in the culture in which they live. They have the power to bring the Gospel into the very heart of their culture, into the fabric of their everyday lives. It is above all when the Christian families have been truly evangelized and are aware of their evangelizing role that there can be an effective evangelization of culture – an effective encounter between the Gospel and culture. The need is great, for as my predecessor Paul VI pointed out: “The split between the Gospel and culture is without a doubt the drama of our time”.

An important aspect of your own evangelizing role is the whole dimension of the enculturation of the Gospel into the lives of your people. Here, you and your priest co-workers offer to your people a perennial message of divine revelation – “the unsearchable riches of Christ” – but at the same time, on the basis of this “eternal Gospel”, you help them “to bring forth from their own living tradition original expressions of Christian life, celebration and thought”.

The Church truly respects the culture of each people. In offering the Gospel message, the Church does not intend to destroy or to abolish what is good and beautiful. In fact she recognizes many cultural values and through the power of the Gospel purifies and takes into Christian worship certain elements of a people’s customs. The Church comes to bring Christ; she does not come to bring the culture of another race. Evangelization aims at penetrating and elevating culture by the power of the Gospel.

On the other hand, we know that God’s revelation exceeds the insights of any culture and of all the cultures of the world put together. With Saint Paul we ought to praise the divine plan: “O the depths of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!”. The profundity of the divine revelation is manifested in the mystery of the Incarnation, which in turn unveils the life of the Most Holy Trinity: the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

And therefore it is clear, as I have stated before, that “the power of the Gospel everywhere transforms and regenerates. When that power enters into a culture, it is no surprise that it rectifies many of its elements”. At the same time, it is through the providence of God that the divine message is made incarnate and is communicated through the culture of each people. It is for ever true that the path of culture is the path of man, and it is on this path that man encounters the One who embodies the values of all cultures and fully reveals the man of each culture to himself. The Gospel of Christ the Incarnate Word finds its home along the path of culture and from this path it continues to offer its message of salvation and eternal life.

Because of these important considerations, dear brothers in Christ, I wish to implore again from the Holy Spirit that “new era of evangelization” of which I spoke to you in Rome. It will, of course, be a gift of God – a gift added to the interminable list of favours bestowed upon your people through the merciful and loving kindness of our God. On our part, it is necessary to have the profound conviction that our own ministry as bishops is indeed a

ministry of evangelization, including the evangelization of culture. As I mentioned in Rome, Jesus himself is indicating to us that evangelization is our “supreme priority”.

4. Before concluding, I wish to add a word about two important aspects of our Gospel ministry.

As we explicitly proclaim God’s gift of salvation, his call to conversion, his merciful forgiveness and his redemptive love, we do so in the context of the Sacrament of Penance and the Holy Eucharist.

In Nigeria your people have been faithful to the mystery of reconciliation and mercy as evidenced in their practice of going to confession. This fidelity is itself a gift of God. In so many areas in the Church throughout the world, the Sacrament of Penance, for various reasons, has been used less than before. The Second Vatican Council and its implementation by the Apostolic See aimed at giving renewed emphasis to certain aspects of the sacrament. These included, for example: the ministry of the Church in the forgiveness of sins; the effect of sin on the whole body of Christ; and the role of the community in the celebration of penance and in the work of reconciliation. But the Second Vatican Council and the Apostolic See in no way willed to initiate a process in which large sectors of the Catholic people would abandon use of the sacrament, or so neglect it in practice as to deny its importance in Christian living. The forthcoming Synod of Bishops will be an excellent opportunity for the Magisterium of the Church to reiterate collegially the vital role of this sacrament and its proper use according to the approved norms of the Church. These norms conform to the divine law and express the authentic renewal willed by the Second Vatican Council and the Apostolic See.

Meanwhile, I ask you to do all you can, dear brothers, to emphasize the importance of the ecclesial nature of the Sacrament of Penance, which is not only in harmony with individual confession and absolution, but which actually requires them, except in those very exceptional cases in which the Church authorizes general absolution.

In calling your people to constant conversion, in preaching the mercy and forgiveness of the Saviour, in emphasizing the community aspect of reconciliation and in promoting the proper use of individual confession and absolution among your people, you are rendering a service of immense value not only to your local Churches but to the universal Church as well. You are extolling the mystery of Redemption and defending one of the most sacred rights of your people. As I stated in my first encyclical: “In faithfully observing the centuries-old practice of the Sacrament of Penance – the practice of individual confession with a personal act of sorrow and the intention to amend and make satisfaction – the Church is therefore defending the human soul’s individual right: man’s right to a more personal encounter with the crucified forgiving Christ... As is evident, this is also a right on Christ’s part with regard to every human being redeemed by him: his right to meet each one of us in that key moment in the soul’s life constituted by the moment of conversion and forgiveness”.

5. Your evangelizing ministry finally reaches its summit, which is at the same time the centre of all sacramental life, in the Eucharist. Here the Gospel is fully proclaimed; here perfect, union with Jesus is offered to the faithful. Here each Christian can receive the saving power of Redemption in its fullness. And here, in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, your own pastoral mission is brought to fulfilment.

Here you are truly one with Christ the Good Shepherd, the Chief Pastor of the flock. All conversion leads up to that union which is fully possible only in the Eucharist. All evangelization points to this centre, which is both its source and summit.

It is also in the Eucharist that we ourselves, bishops of the Church of God, find pastoral strength and joy to lead God's people in the way of salvation and eternal life. Here we assemble, in Christ's name, his pilgrim Church on their journey to the Father, "the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort". Here we show Jesus to our people and advance with him, in holiness and truth, towards the eternal embrace of the Father's love, towards the full communion of life with the Most Holy Trinity.

This, my brother bishops, is my ministry and yours – our evangelizing ministry – at the service of God's people in Nigeria and wherever his blessed providence directs your missionary zeal.

Praised be Jesus Christ, praised be his redemptive love, praised be his Gospel of salvation!

I want to open my heart with a gift I brought to you for this occasion to your Conference: it is an image of my heart, of my origin; and also of my hope in the future of the Church, of humanity and of every human family in all mother-nations (especially my own mother-nation) in the world. Thank you very much for your participation; thank you from the depths of my heart for your preparation. I expressed my gratefulness to your collaborators before, and to the whole Committee; now I repeat the same to every one of you, and to the entire Bishops' Conference of Nigeria. If the whole visit is proceeding so well, it is of course the fruit of Divine Grace, of the blessing of our Lord; but it is also a fruit of your ministry, of your apostolic fraternal desire and of the spirit of unity among you and with the Bishop of Rome. I am deeply grateful to all of you for that and for all sorts of spiritual preparation: it isn't perhaps as visible as an external preparation, but basically all external preparation is just a mirror in which the spiritual reflects its image. Thank you for the spiritual preparation of your Church, of your people, for this special mission: your country, Nigeria, had many missionaries, especially from Ireland. We can now bless that land, having given so many of its sons to the missions of the whole Church, and particularly in your own land. Now, the Pope's visit is a special missionary experience: and I wish to thank all former generations of bishops, priests and missionaries who prepared this special experience, and together with you I thank our Lord through his Mother.

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE LEADERS OF DIFFERENT
CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS FAMILIES**

Lagos (Nigeria), 16 February 1982

Dear friends in our Lord Jesus Christ,

1. It is with great pleasure that I meet you, distinguished and respected bishops and other leaders of the different Christian religious families in Nigeria. My pastoral visit from its very planning was meant to have an important ecumenical dimension, for I see work for the unity of all Christians as an essential element in my own ministry as Bishop of Rome and Pastor of the Catholic Church. This encounter therefore fulfils one of my dearest desires. I am very pleased to greet you in the love of our common Lord: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all".

The Catholic Church has much in common with your various ecclesial communities. We are all baptized in Christ, whom we confess as our Lord and Saviour, and whom we acknowledge as the “one Mediator between God and man”. The Bible and especially the Gospels are dear to us all, because they are the word of God and the revelation of his saving love. Our fundamental religious orientation is directed by our faith in Christ, our love for him, and our desire to help in the spreading of his Kingdom into the hearts of all, among all peoples, and at all times.

We also share common views on fundamental human rights, on justice and peace, on development, and on the need to live according to one’s faith. We believe that there must be no dichotomy between the Gospel message and Christian living.

2. While it is true that, both in Nigeria and in the world at large, the sad phenomenon of Christian disunity is still to be found, it is also true that achievements have been recorded in the field of ecumenism, in this country as well as internationally. The Catholic Church is engaged in a fruitful dialogue at international level with many of the Churches and confessional bodies that you represent; and here in Nigeria there is now much more dialogue, formal and informal, between yourselves and also between you and the Catholic Church, than in the past. So too there is a growing collaboration at world level in works of Christian service and charity. This also finds its expression in your own country. The Christian Association of Nigeria which was solemnly inaugurated in 1980 is working at national, regional and state levels with appreciable success. The Christian Health Association of Nigeria is a sound association of all Church medical institutions in this vast country. It has done much good, especially in joint approaches to Government and in projects of producing and distributing medical supplies at reduced prices. All of this constitutes a common witness to the charity of Christ.

Moreover, your common efforts with the Catholic Church in the Bible Society of Nigeria has yielded dividends, especially in joint projects of Bible translation into your many languages, and in the subsidizing of Bibles so that the poor can buy them too. These efforts are the expression of true zeal, “that the word of the Lord may speed on and triumph”.

You also issue joint statements when the occasion demands it. You show concern for the place of the Church and religion in Nigerian schools. And you promote national unity and understanding in other ways too. May God bless all these efforts.

3. It is my hope that you Nigerian Christians will pray ever more fervently that the Holy Spirit will give you the gift of perfect unity in Christ. Meanwhile, it is necessary to continue your joint projects of Bible translation, dialogue and common witness to Christ in the Christian Association of Nigeria.

Promote more and more the joint study of Christ’s teaching and of the moral exigencies of true discipleship in Christian living. Above all, love one another as Christ has loved us. This is his special commandment.

In all these ways we pray and work, hope and wait for the day, known to God alone, when we shall be fully one in Christ, when we shall celebrate the one Holy Eucharist and drink from the same Sacred Chalice.

I thank you. I respect you. I beg God to bless you abundantly. May the peace of Christ reign in your hearts.

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS

Lagos (Nigeria), 16 February 1982

*Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

1. It gives me great pleasure to meet here so many distinguished members of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Federal Government of Nigeria. In you I greet not only the eminent representatives of various Governments, but also all the people of your nations. Wherever I travel I cherish the opportunity of meeting the members of the diplomatic community. While representing directly your respective Governments, you and your colleagues are also among the foremost builders of an international community that reaches beyond the confines of any particular territory.

Indeed, you are called to foster the common good of the world community over and above legitimate national interests.

2. On many occasions I have expressed my profound appreciation of the service which diplomats perform. The Holy See itself, which is always intent on promoting peaceful and fruitful relations with the civil authorities, is always happy when stable relations are established between itself and these States which so desire. The Apostolic Nuncios and Pro-Nuncios are among my most valued collaborators, and the Heads of the Missions accredited to the Holy See at the Vatican are highly esteemed partners in our common search and efforts to promote a climate of brotherhood and solidarity among all people of good will. With mutual deference for the respective prerogatives of Church and State, so much can be achieved in open dialogue and loyal collaboration for the benefit of mankind – for the benefit of every human being. No one who is serious about fostering the well-being of the human person can escape international cooperation. I know, Ladies and Gentlemen, that you are deeply aware of the need to pool all resources and efforts in order to build for mankind a world order of peace and justice.

3. Yours is a lofty mission and a constantly new challenge. Your task has been variously described as the fine art of doing what is politically possible to reconcile opposed or even contradictory interests between countries, to represent your own country's role in the international domain, and to build bridges between peoples of different origins and cultural identity. Whatever may be emphasized as the distinctive characteristic of your mission, it is evident that diplomats must always distinguish themselves as specialists in dialogue and partnership.

We stand at the threshold of the third millennium and ours is an exciting period of history, with undreamed-of opportunities in the scientific and technological fields, but also fraught with contradictions and constant deadlocks in mutual relations. It is imperative to move beyond the kinds of viewpoint or fixed positions that tend to make dialogue difficult or impossible. This is done by making the dignity of the human person – every human person – the basis and starting-point for better relations. While the human person is paramount, it is

also true that the human person belongs to a particular group or nation, that he cherishes certain values inherent in his historical and cultural heritage, and that he aligns himself with certain positions. This is normal and natural. Hence there exists a variety of social structures and political options that can advance the common good while truly respecting human dignity. But artificial and unnecessary oppositions easily result in polarization and impede the dialogue and the true partnership that are capable of overcoming obstacles and resolving deadlocks.

Dialogue between peoples and nations, despite economic, monetary and material inequalities, must take place on the basis of equality in dignity and in sovereignty. Economic or monetary superiority, the possession of material goods and resources or technological capacity do not justify political or social, cultural or moral superiority of one people or nation over another. This further means that any position that seeks to justify such alleged superiority on an ideological or philosophical basis is not a valid position and must be rejected. True dialogue and partnership demand a constant reference to the fundamental truth about man: the dignity and quality of the human person, individually and as a member of a society.

4. Your mission, Ladies and Gentlemen, assumes a special dimension and urgency because it has placed you in the Third World. The plight of many Third World countries remains a constant reminder that the development issue is not dead, although one sometimes gains the impression that it is no longer viewed with the priority that it continues to deserve. Many of the world's governments today seem more preoccupied with other matters, such as inflation and military security. And yet, despite the impressive level of economic growth which some developing countries have achieved over the past decades, millions of people still remain caught up in a poverty that not only means low incomes, but also malnutrition, hunger, illiteracy lack of education, persistent unemployment and reduced life expectancy.

In my latest encyclical I drew attention to this situation, especially when I stated that "the disproportionate distribution of wealth and poverty and the existence of some countries and continents that are developed and others that are not call for a levelling out and for a search for ways to ensure just development for all". I referred to "a disconcerting fact of immense proportions; the fact that, while conspicuous natural resources remain unused, there are huge numbers of people who are unemployed or underemployed and countless multitudes of people suffering from hunger".

Integral human development deserves special attention too in that it serves a vital function in the great cause of international peace. Peace throughout the world is possible only when there is internal peace in each country. And internal peace will never be attained until each nation gives sufficient attention to the promotion of a just development which is advantageous to all its citizens.

This decade too must listen to the prophetic utterance of Paul IV who, fifteen years ago, proclaimed that the "new name of peace is development". With these words he called millions of people to accept new responsibility for peace and offered a new hope to the needy and downtrodden of the world.

Thus it is necessary to devise ways of urging governments to continue to make the development issue a top priority in their formulation of new policies and programmes. It is likewise important to insist on a development which respects the dignity and inalienable rights of the human person, and not merely a technological or economic development. In this

framework, integral human development is closely linked to the pursuit of equality and justice and to a sincere concern for the weakest and poorest members of society.

5. Integral development, like peace itself, requires also the serene climate of human freedom. Here too, as diplomats, you must have an unalterable conviction and an irrevocable commitment.

Individual human beings must express freedom in the actual power of choice, in the responsible determination of their actions, and in that self-mastery which excludes exterior constraint. So too whole peoples must be able effectively to enjoy rightful autonomy and independence and exercise them in national sovereignty, without outside interference. And it is your own national sovereignty which you are endeavouring to represent so worthily within the one family of a humanity that embraces all nations.

6. Ladies and Gentlemen, you are eminently well placed to promote dialogue and true partnership, and to build bridges of mutual understanding for the benefit of all. In a world and a continent so full of promise and yet so ravaged by dissensions, exploitation, in justice, misunderstandings and all kinds of threats to peace, you have a splendid role to play: to foster justice, to work for reconciliation and to reinforce human solidarity. You are called to be outstanding peacemakers, generous servants of your fellowman in the cause of development, and faithful defenders of true freedom. May God bless you in this exalted assignment.

***ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE REPRESENTATIVES
OF THE PRESS, RADIO AND TELEVISION***

Lagos (Nigeria), 16 February 1982

1. For the first time since last May the thirteenth, I am able to have direct contact with a group of representatives of the press, radio and television. And I am happy that it is a meeting with you who have been with me during my latest journey to Africa, the first I have made outside of Italy since the attempt on my life.

Many of you were in Rome last summer to inform your readers, viewers and listeners about the course of my recovery. I wish to thank you once more for the concern you demonstrated during that episode. I attribute its happy ending to the special protection of God and to the intercession of his Blessed Mother.

2. And now God's providence has arranged that in the space of less than two years I should make a second visit to the African continent. This meeting with you, particularly the journalists and the radio and television representatives of African countries, gives me an opportunity to reflect with you on the importance of the means of social communication in Africa today.

Here you are at the initial stages of the development of your mass media, while the more industrialized countries have already reached a high level of development in this sector. This situation increases your responsibility, while giving you a unique opportunity. Through your action, your professional honesty and your dedication to the cause of truth, you can make a

decisive contribution to this continent. By orienting the mass media totally to the service of man and in favour of objective information, Africa can determine its own future development.

3. We know that today in this sector, as in others, there are dangerous imbalances, and that various international organizations have spoken out against them. There is a tendency towards the exercise of outside pressure in the world of the press, radio and television, with the imposition, by the stronger countries, not only of technology but also of ideas. For this reason I feel it is important to stress that national sovereignty is safeguarded through the correct use of the communications media, precisely because these media can become instruments of ideological pressure. And this ideological pressure is more dangerous and insidious than many more obviously coercive means.

4. The Catholic Church will continue to call attention to the role of social communications. Since the Second Vatican Council she has multiplied her efforts in this sector. This year marks the tenth anniversary of the publication of the Pastoral Instruction “*Communio et Progressio*”. In this document there are three words which stand out prominently: sincerity, honesty, and truth. If each of you succeeds in putting these principles into practice in your own sphere of competence, then the means of social communication will truly become for all humanity the means of social and cultural advancement – the means of true progress.

This is the hope that accompanies the expression of my gratitude for all the sacrifices and services you have so generously given during my pastoral pilgrimage to Nigeria, which is now drawing to a close.

May God bless you and your families and enable all of you to know his love and to experience his peace.

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE NON-NIGERIANS

Lagos, (Nigeria), 16 February 1982

Dear Friends,

I rejoice at this encounter with you, all you non-Nigerians who are living and working in this great country. Many of you come from parts of Europe, including my own dear country. But a good number of you are from other African nations.

1. You are living and working in Nigeria because Nigeria welcomes you and because you accept and respect Nigeria. You are in this country in different capacities. Some of you are engaged in the oil industry, in big civil and mechanical engineering works and in major industrial concerns. Some of you are members or officials of international organizations. Yet others are engaged in academic pursuits, teaching, medical work, administration, trade or commerce. Others of you are working on your own account.

2. Your presence and activities in Nigeria are signs of universal brotherhood. You and the Nigerians give to each other the right hand of brotherhood, friendship, cooperation and solidarity.

You give and you receive. The Nigerians give and they receive.

Be loyal to Nigeria which welcomes you. Love Nigeria. Help Nigeria. Do nothing that will damage Nigeria. Obey her laws. Respect her leaders. Help Nigeria to rise to greater heights. Make friends with Nigerians.

You are also unofficial ambassadors of your various countries. Bear this in mind. Let your conduct bring to your countries nothing but honour, peace, joy and the cementing of international relations.

3. You do not want to lose your national identities. You are right in this. Your home cultures meet the Nigerian culture as friends who ever seek to understand each other better. Both sides are enriched.

Do not forget religion and its practice while you are outside your home country. Where language becomes a problem, please discuss with the bishops and priests and other religious leaders how your group can be properly served.

All you non-Nigerian nationals working in Nigeria, the Pope has a deep interest in your well-being and in the well-being of your families, especially if there is physical separation involved. Always honour Nigeria and your home countries. May God's abundant blessings descend on you all.

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II AT THE DEPARTURE FROM NIGERIA

Lagos, 17 February 1982

1. The moment has come, Mr President, Your Eminence, my brother bishops, Government leaders, and all you wonderful people of Nigeria, for me to say good-bye.

I am filled with gratitude. I am full of joy. You have spared no effort to arrange everything so beautifully for my travel and for the celebrations and encounters.

I thank the President, the Vice-President, and all the Government officials at all levels for their very cordial reception and hospitality and for their generous assistance.

I thank the Catholic bishops and all the Catholic committees that have worked with so much competence and dedication.

My gratitude goes likewise to all the pilots, drivers, security men, and to every man, woman and child who have shown such wonderful hospitality and lively interest.

2. I take away with me very vivid memories of a great nation, a generous people, a dynamic Church, a richly endowed and warm-hearted youth, a country which honours the family, respects the elderly and regards children as a blessing. In short, I take with me an unforgettable memory of a country which is a credit to Africa, to the world and to the Church of Jesus Christ.

Although I have to go now, my heart remains with all of you. Shall I be able some time in the future to visit Nigeria again? Will the Providence of the Almighty and Merciful God dispose that I come back again to kiss your soil, embrace your children, encourage your youth and walk once more amidst the love and affection of the noble people of your land? We leave the future to God, to his wisdom and his fatherly care. It is to him – to the God and Creator and Father of us all that I entrust the future and the destiny of Nigeria.

3. And now I wish to address my final word to a very special person who is there in your midst – everywhere I look. It is the Nigerian child: each boy and girl created in the image and likeness of God. It is to the child of this great land, the child endowed with human dignity and inalienable rights, the child who reflects the love of God in his or her eyes and expresses it with a smile, that I leave my message of brotherhood, friendship and love. I ask you, dear child – for I know you are listening to me – to pass on this message to your brothers and sisters and to the children who will come after you.

Whoever you are, this message of love belongs to your religion as it does to mine: what I am saying is that you and every other child are loved by God and worthy of love. And that this love must spread everywhere and take possession of every single heart. The love that I am talking about means that you have to love God in return for this love; and you do this by loving every other child of God on this earth. This love means that there is no place for selfishness, for lying, for meanness, for hatred, for discrimination, for violence in this world. It means that you and every other child on earth are equal in dignity before God: whatever your age, your race, your nationality; whether you are a boy or a girl; whether you are rich or poor; whether you are strong or weak; whether you are healthy or sick or handicapped. The love that I ask you to have for every brother and sister, every person alive, is the love of generosity and kindness, of sacrifice, of friendship and peace.

What I am saying can be summed up in just a few words and it can be said in different ways. But let me say it to you in my way, the way that I learned it, the way I was taught by my mother, who told me when I was a child: “Treat others the way you would have them treat you”. Dear child of Nigeria: by acting in this way, you have more power than all the nuclear power station in the world, because you have the power to bring peace and happiness to the world. I am talking about the power that is yours under God, the power to love, the power to love every other child. Dear child: God has loved you; now you must love in return.

Good-bye and God bless all Nigeria!