

APOSTOLIC PILGRIMAGE TO ZIMBABWE,  
BOTSWANA, LESOTHO, SWAZILAND, MOZAMBIQUE 10 - 19 SEPTEMBRE 1988

**HOLY MASS AT "BORROWDALE PARK RACE COURSE"**

***HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II***

*Harare (Zimbabwe)  
Sunday, 11 September 1988*

*"The Lord is my shepherd" (Ps. 23 (22), 1).*

*Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,*

1. Today I stand in your midst as the Bishop of Rome and I make this joyful proclamation: *"The Lord is my shepherd"*. I make it together with you, with the whole Church and with all the People of God who dwell in your country, Zimbabwe.

I come to you as a pastor. I come in the name of the Lord who is our Shepherd. I come in the name of Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, the Eternal Pastor of our souls. And in his name I extend most cordial greetings to all those who constitute the Church in Zimbabwe: the bishops from your six dioceses, and in particular Archbishop Patrick Chakaipa of Harare. Together with them, I greet the priests, the men and women religious, and the seminarians of your Regional Seminary.

Christ is present in the daily life of this country through the dedicated members of your laity. I therefore wish to embrace you who bear witness to our Redeemer in the ordinary events of life: the families of Zimbabwe, fathers and mothers, small children and young people, the elders and the leaders of your local communities.

I greet those who build up the social and cultural life of Zimbabwe: all those who work on the land, in offices and in schools, in business and industry, in government and in social services. In a special way I embrace in the love of Jesus the lonely and the sick, as well as those who care for them.

At the same time, it is a joy to greet *the bishops who are members of IMBISA*, the Inter-Regional Meeting of Bishops of Southern Africa. I am very grateful to the Lord for the grace of meeting with you last evening, and for the opportunity to concelebrate this Mass which brings your meeting to a close. I assure you of my fraternal concern for each of you as you seek to give a shepherd's care to the flock entrusted to you. Through you, dear brothers, I greet your local Churches. In particular, I am thinking of the Church in the countries which I have not been able to include in this pastoral journey: my brothers and sisters in Christ in Angola, Namibia, São Tomé e Príncipe and South Africa. Upon returning to your homes, please assure your people of my closeness to them in prayer and of my love for them in Christ Jesus.

Aos amados fiéis da Igreja em Angola, Moçambique e São Tomé e Príncipe, através dos seus Bispos, que participaram na Assembleia da IMBISA, envio as minhas cordiais saudações.

Sinto-me muito unido convosco, irmãos e irmãs, na caridade divina, e desejo-vos felicidades, graça e paz, em Jesus Cristo, nosso Senhor e Salvador

2. At your invitation I have willingly come to Zimbabwe. I have come as the Successor of Peter and Bishop of Rome, who has inherited a particular *mission and responsibility, linked with the witness of the Apostles Peter and Paul*. For Peter and Paul strengthened the very foundation of the Church by their apostolic service, and above all by their death as martyrs, *giving their lives for Christ, for the truth which is Christ himself*. This truth they have faithfully handed on to all generations of the Church. This same truth I come to proclaim to you, as the Successor of Peter in the last part of the twentieth century.

Ever since the time of the Apostles, *the Church has built on this truth*, not only in Rome but throughout the entire world. In your country too the Church of Christ builds on this truth, in communion with the Apostolic See of Rome.

She builds *on the strength of the bond of truth and love*, a bond which the Holy Spirit has sustained in every age since the day of Pentecost and continues to do so today among the different peoples and nations that make up the one great People of God.

It was God's truth and love which inspired Father Gonçalves da Silveira to come to the Zambezi Valley in 1560, and in the following year to lay down his life in order to plant in this land the first seeds of the Christian faith. Other missionaries followed in his footsteps, beginning with the Jesuit and Dominican religious families.

The most intense efforts at evangelization and the most widespread fruits of those efforts have been seen in the past hundred years. The Holy Spirit – the Spirit of Truth and Love – has been at work in your midst in a remarkable way, moving hearts to accept the saving message of the Gospel, planting many native vocations to the priesthood and religious life, building up the family of believers into a holy dwelling place for God. You have thus become a new people, reborn in the Sacrament of Baptism, nourished by the Holy Eucharist, living in loving communion with God and with one another, with the Successor of Peter and the Catholic Church throughout the world.

Undoubtedly the most eloquent expression of God's grace and of the power of truth and love has been the heroic witness of those who have given their lives in service of the Gospel. I am thinking in particular of those who have been killed in the past fifteen years, including Bishop Adolph Schmitt, a number of your priests and religious, and many of your laity. To all of them I wish to pay tribute today. Their courageous testimony will never be forgotten. They have shown to all of us the power of truth and love. In them we see incarnate the victory of the Cross and Resurrection of Christ.

3. The Gospel of today's Liturgy directs our thoughts towards the Apostle Peter who, later in his life, in Rome, was to become the foundation of the faith of the whole Church.

See how Jesus – in the region of Caesarea Philippi – puts a question to his disciples: "Who do people say I am?" (*Marc. 8, 27*). And then he puts a second: "But you, who do you say I am?" (*Ibid. 8, 29*). And at that moment Peter answers, speaking in the name of all the Apostles: "You are the Christ" (*Ibid.*). Or as Saint Matthew records it, the answer was: "You are the Christ (the Messiah), the Son of the living God" (*Matth. 16, 16*).

“Messiah” means the one whom God had anointed with the Holy Spirit and sent to accomplish the work of salvation.

Thus Peter professes his faith. And Christ accepts his profession but then goes on to foretell his own Passion and Resurrection. He declares: “The Son of Man was destined to suffer grievously, to be rejected... and to be put to death, and after three days to rise again” (*Marc.* 8, 31).

Peter, who has professed that Jesus is the Messiah, is astonished by these words. He takes his Master aside and rebukes him. What does this “rebuke” mean? It means that he tries to convince Jesus that what he has said cannot happen, that such a mission and death cannot happen to him, precisely because he is the Messiah, because he has been sent by God and anointed with the Holy Spirit.

And how does Christ react? He in turn rebukes Peter, in words that are very severe. He says “Get behind me, Satan! Because the way you think is not God’s way but man’s” (*Ibid.* 8, 33).

Yes, Peter already *believed in Christ*, but he was not yet ready to accept *the whole truth* about Christ. Like so many of his contemporaries, Peter was thinking of the Messiah in human terms: he saw Jesus as the one who could restore freedom to Israel.

4. But in fact *the full truth* about Christ, about the Messiah, did soon become known. It became known exactly as Jesus had foretold. And only then did Peter believe: he believed that *the Messiah* sent by God was *the Crucified and Risen Christ*.

Peter professed and proclaimed this truth about Christ, beginning on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem right up to the day when for the sake of this truth he gave his life on the Vatican Hill in Rome. And by believing and teaching this, Peter *thought and spoke in God’s way and not in man’s*.

5. In the light of Peter’s profession of faith, what does it mean that *Christ is the Good Shepherd*? It means that he “*offers his life for the sheep*” (Cfr. *Io.* 10, 11). When the Psalmist of the Old Testament boldly proclaimed: “The Lord is my shepherd”, his inspired words foretold a Shepherd who would offer his life for the flock, for all people; a Shepherd who would redeem them all with the Sacrifice of his own death on the Cross.

Today, *we have gathered* here in Harare to celebrate the Eucharist, which is the “*memorial*” of that *redemptive Sacrifice of Christ*. It is its unbloody renewal under the forms of bread and wine.

When he instituted the Eucharist on the day before his Passion, Jesus gave the disciples the Passover bread and said: “*This is my body* which will be given up for you”. Then he gave them the Passover wine in a cup, saying: “*This the cup of my blood*, the blood of the new and everlasting covenant. It will be shed for you and for all so that sins may be forgiven”.

6. In the Eucharist, then, we celebrate the Sacrifice of the Covenant, the new and everlasting Covenant. This is God’s Covenant with his people which had been foretold by the Prophet Ezekiel: “I will make a covenant of peace with them: it shall be an everlasting covenant with them... I will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My dwelling place shall be with them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (*Ez.* 37, 26-27).

God made this Covenant with all humanity in the blood of his Son on Calvary. He made it with all people, with every person on earth. He made it also with you: with the people of Africa who live in the nation of Zimbabwe. And so we can sing with the Psalmist:

“The Lord is my shepherd;  
there is nothing I shall want...  
Near restful wafers he leads me...  
He guides me along the right path” (*Ps. 23 (22), 1-3*).

7. What, then, must we do, dear brothers and sisters, to keep this Covenant with our God?

The response is given to us by the Apostle James in his Letter, which we heard in today’s Second Reading: “If one of the brothers or one of the sisters is in need of clothes and has not enough food to live on, and one of you says to them, ‘ I wish you well: keep yourself warm and eat plenty’, without giving them these bare necessities of life, then *what good is that?*” (*Iac. 2, 15-16*).

*We must believe in the word of God. And we must also confirm our faith with works which are born of faith:* “Faith is like that: if good works do not go with it, it is quite dead” (*Ibid. 2, 17*).

And one of the first good works which flow from faith, one that is so desperately needed in this place and everywhere, is the work of reconciliation: reconciliation with God, reconciliation with one another.

Your own country has known only too well the pain and suffering caused by sins such as racial discrimination and segregation, which deny the human dignity and full equality of other people simply because of the colour of their skin or because of the tribe to which they belong. The sins of greed and lust for power, as well as the sins of dishonesty and selfishness, likewise destroy bonds of trust and weaken the very fabric of society. These are sins which work against the harmonious and full development of your nation.

Yet all these sins can be overcome with the help of the God of the Covenant and through your faith in him. In the Sacrament of Baptism *God reconciled you with himself and entrusted to you the work of reconciliation*. In the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Penance, you are strengthened in faith and in the love of God: you experience the joy of *coming together in Christ*, and you are sent forth to overcome disunity wherever it exists – within your families and villages or in any sector of the country of Zimbabwe.

8. If we want to keep the Covenant with God which Christ accomplished through his blood, in his Cross and Resurrection, *we must follow Christ himself*. He has called us to be his disciples, and he continues to say to us:

“If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and *take up his Cross and follow me*. For anyone who wants to save his life will lose it: but anyone who loses his life for my sake, and for the sake of the Gospel, will save it” (*Marc. 8, 34-35*). Think carefully about these words of Christ! Go back to them often in your mind, in your heart, in your prayer. The Good Shepherd offers his life for the sheep. He has given his life in sacrifice to the Father.

“If I should walk in the valley of darkness no evil would I fear. *You are there*” (Ps. 23 (22), 4). You, Jesus Christ! You are with me! You, Jesus Christ, the Eternal Shepherd of every individual and of all peoples! You are with me!

“Surely goodness and kindness shall follow me all the days of my life.  
In the Lord’s own house shall I dwell for ever and ever” (*Ibid.* 6).

Amen.

## **HOLY MASS AT "ASCOT RACE COURSE"**

### ***HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II***

*Bulawayo (Zimbabwe)  
Monday, 12 September 1988*

"Come, *let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,*  
to the Temple of God of Jacob  
that he may teach us his ways  
so that we may walk in his paths" (*Is.* 2, 3)

*Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,*

1. This invitation of the Prophet Isaiah, an invitation of the Old Covenant, *finds its fulfilment* with the coming of the New Covenant, the new and eternal Covenant in the Blood of Christ: in his Cross and Resurrection.

Behold, the Apostles “*set out for Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had arranged to meet them*” (*Matth.* 28, 16).

Christ will soon go to the Father. Before departing, however, he will say to them:

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations; baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you And know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time” (*Matth.* 28, 18-20).

2. “*Make disciples of all the nations; baptize them*”.

This command of Christ has already been carried out, in fact it is constantly being carried out, in the midst of all the nations of the earth. *It has happened and is constantly happening in your midst*, on the African continent, in this nation which is called “Zimbabwe”. In fact, the first efforts of evangelization began here more than four hundred years ago, efforts which were inspired by a great love for the Risen Lord and which yet failed to establish among you a lasting Christian community. It was not until 1879 that a sustained missionary effort by the

Catholic Church could be achieved. But from that time forward, your country has witnessed and been blessed by the constant fulfilment of Christ's command.

Over the past century, the missionary enterprise has experienced numerous changes, changes in the choices of priorities and changes in the methods employed. But at every stage *teaching has played a central role*. Jesus said: "Make disciples... baptize them... teach them". And that is what you have done.

The prodigious result of evangelization is clearly evident in the Church in modern Zimbabwe, and in this Eucharistic celebration today. I assure you, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, that it is a great joy for me to be here among you to witness at first hand the marvellous works that *Divine Providence* is accomplishing in this land, and to celebrate together with you these Sacred Mysteries.

In the Holy Name of Jesus I greet you all: in the first place the Bishop of Bulawayo, Bishop Karlen, and with him all my brother bishops who share with me, the Bishop of Rome, the responsibility of shepherding the flock of Christ and proclaiming the Good News of salvation. In a special way, I greet Bishop Ignatius Prieto on the twenty-fifth anniversary of his episcopal ordination, and also on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Diocese of Hwange. To Bishop Prieto and to all his people I extend my congratulations and prayerful good wishes.

I also offer fraternal greetings to the priests, religious and laity who represent all the parish communities of this vast region of Zimbabwe known as Matabeleland. It is in the local Christian communities that the message of Christ is first received and fostered, and it is there that it must daily be put into practice. In the parish communities, faith and hope and love are the guiding principles of your lives.

I know that there are many who have not been able to come here today, even though they very much wanted to do so. I therefore ask you, my friends in Christ, to take back to your local parishes the warm greetings of the Pope. Assure them of my pastoral love in the Sacred Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ.

3. At this celebration of the Eucharist, I ask you to join me in giving thanks to God for the achievements of evangelization in Zimbabwe and to pray for the continuing success of evangelizing efforts.

*What is evangelization?*

We could answer with the words of the Apostle Paul in his Letter to the Romans:

"If *your lips* confess that Jesus is Lord and if you believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, then *you will be saved*" (*Rom.* 10, 9). Evangelization means accepting God's revelation of himself in Jesus Christ. It involves *accepting in faith what God has revealed to humanity*, accepting the truth about the Crucified and Risen Christ (as we say in the Creed, "He was crucified, suffered death and was buried; on the third day, he rose again").

It is precisely this Christ who "*is the Lord of all*". As Lord, as the one to whom "all authority in heaven and on earth has been given", Christ *distributes to everyone the riches of salvation* which he won for us by the sacrifice of his life on the Cross. The riches of salvation are the *riches of the love and grace of God*. We share in these riches through faith. Saint Paul says:

“By believing from the heart you are made righteous; by confessing with your lips you are saved”.

It is a question then of a *faith accepted with the heart* (with the intellect and will), a faith rooted in our inmost depths. And then, *it is professed with our lips and with our works*. “For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (*Ibid.* 10, 13).

4. Such faith *helps us to look at the world in a new way*, to look at all that surrounds us in a new light. It enables us to see the whole of creation as *the handiwork of God, his gift*. Then, through creation we can turn to the Creator and glorify him with our hearts and our lips; we glorify him after the manner of the splendid *Psalms of today's Liturgy*:

“Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you. *The earth has yielded its fruit* for God, our God, has blessed us.

May God still give us his blessing till *the ends of the earth revere him*” (*Ps.* 67 (66), 6-8).

Faith in the Crucified and Risen Christ also *inspires us to transform the world in the Spirit of God*. But first it means a transformation of the human heart, which has its consequences in society and in relationships between individuals and nations.

*Let us return again to the words of the Prophet Isaiah:*

“Come, let us go up to the mountain of Yahweh, to the Temple of the God of Jacob that *he may teach us his ways* so that *we may walk in his paths*; since the Law will go out from Zion, and the oracle of Yahweh from Jerusalem. He will wield authority over the nations and adjudicate between many peoples; these will hammer their swords into ploughshares, their spears into sickles. Nation will not lift sword against nation, there will be no more training for war. O House of Jacob, come, Let us walk in the light of Yahweh” (*Is.* 2, 3-5).

5. Evangelization *begins in the human heart*, in that intimate dialogue between each of us and God, where we recognize our sins and acknowledge our need for a Saviour, where we come to believe and profess with our lips that Jesus Christ is Lord.

But faith can never remain a purely private matter. For the Sacrament of Baptism makes us members of the Christian community, and we are expected to become active members of a local Church; we are expected to listen to God's word, take part in the Sacred Liturgy, live in fraternal charity. And our faith in Christ opens our eyes to see beyond our own parish community, to the life of the *universal Church* and *the needs of the world* around us. The Church is present in the world *for the sake of the world*. And each member shares a responsibility in bringing God's love to the world.

Here in Zimbabwe, this means that you are called by Christ to respond to the needs and difficulties of your fellow citizens. We think immediately of the *great suffering caused by war*. It is only eight years since your struggle for national independence was brought to an end. Even after that, many people in Matabeleland did not find true peace. How the civilian population continued to suffer from guerilla warfare and other forms of violence! As recently as April of this year *Brother Killian Knoerl* of this diocese was a victim of such violence.

I know that you yourselves have not only suffered but you have also tried to help the many victims of violence: the crippled, the maimed, the bereaved, those unjustly deprived of property and savings. At the same time, you have had to work patiently but continually for *reconciliation and peace*, a goal not easily achieved after years of conflict. You have been trying to bring about the fulfilment of the Prophecy of Isaiah, where he foretells that the people “will hammer their swords into ploughshares, their spears into sickles. Nation will not lift sword against nation, there will be no more training for war”.

Yes, “no more training for war”. But there will be *training for peace and development* and especially *training in the truth*. That is why education is so important in both development and evangelization. Training implies commitment to the apostolate of teaching and to schools, particularly for young people. The future of Zimbabwe depends on it. The future of the Church in Zimbabwe will be shaped by it. For education is essential for human development. As Pope Paul VI reminded us: “*Between evangelization and human advancement – development and liberation – there are profound links*” (Pauli VI *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 31). Since every person has social and economic needs as well as spiritual ones, the Church can never ignore any aspect of what it means to be fully human. Her educational programmes aim to develop the whole person – body and soul.

The Church has great concern for *the family*, the family as a whole and its individual members. In your country, as in most countries of the world, the stability of family life is being seriously threatened by problems such as sexual immorality and irregular unions as well as economic insecurity and inadequate housing. Efforts to strengthen family life and to teach the true nature of marriage need to begin in the local parish communities, where individuals and their concrete circumstances are best known. Accordingly, the work of evangelization, which is the very reason for the existence of the Church, must also engage the family, and through the family make *active disciples of every member of the Church*.

6. It was for the sake of evangelization that Christ sent his Apostles into the whole world, and he wanted every follower of his to take an active share in it. This mission must be carried out in such a way that the lives of *all who believe* in Christ will always *abound in good works*, so that they will bring to individuals and nations *true development and progress*.

But in order that this mission may be really effective, we must keep in mind the words of Saint Paul to the Romans:

“They will not ask his help unless they believe in him, and *they will not believe in him unless they have heard of him*, and they will not hear of him unless they get a preacher, and *they will never have a preacher unless one is sent*” (Rom.10, 14-15).

But who is to be sent? Who are the evangelizers? Pope Paul VI answered these questions very clearly when he said: “It is the whole Church that receives the mission to evangelize, and the work of each individual member is important for the whole... *The person who has been evangelized goes on to evangelize others*. Here lies the test of truth, the touchstone of evangelization: it is unthinkable that a person should accept the word and give himself to the Kingdom without becoming a person who bears witness to it and proclaims it in his turn” (Pauli VI *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 15.24). And so, in your Christian communities in Zimbabwe, those who have themselves suffered are best equipped to console and encourage others. As Saint Paul puts it, “(God) comforts us in all our sorrows, so that we can offer others, in their sorrows, the consolation that we have received from God ourselves” (2 Cor. 1, 4).



*The best apostles to youth will often be young people themselves, young men and women who rejoice in their faith in Christ and who know the importance of daily prayer. And married couples whose love for one another has been sealed in the Sacrament of Matrimony and built up in daily sacrifice are best able to help other husbands and wives to enter more fully into the mystery of Christ's love for the Church. Family circles, retreats for married people and marriage enrichment programmes are also suitable means for this marriage and family apostolate.*

But our families and small Christian communities, our parishes and dioceses, also need pastors and guardians, servants who devote themselves exclusively to the care of God's flock. We need, in other words, good *priests and men and women religious*. Without their prayer and dedicated service, evangelization could lose its sense of direction and, above all, its awareness of the universal dimension of the Church.

7. Today *the Bishop of Rome*, mindful of his apostolic inheritance from Saints Peter and Paul, *joins you in giving thanks for the fruit of evangelization which you have already received.*

Truly, "the earth has yielded its fruit". Indeed, "God, our God, has blessed us". And yet we know that, "Not everyone... listens to the Good News" (*Rom. 10, 16*). So Christ said and continues to say: "Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations".

As I stand here in this land, on this continent, I invite you: *let us lift our hearts to him who is "the Lord of the harvest"* and let us never cease to pray *that he "send labourers to his harvest"* (*Matth. 9, 38*).

To his harvest!

*For this harvest is indeed rich!*

## **HOLY MASS IN THE "NATIONAL STADIUM"**

### ***HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II***

*Gaborone, Botswana  
Tuesday, 13 September 1988*

"Peace be with you... Receive the Holy Spirit. For those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven; for those whose sins you retain, they are retained" (*Io. 20, 21-23*).

*Beloved Brothers and Sisters,  
Dear Friends in Christ,*

1. In today's Gospel we read that following the crucifixion, on the first day of the week, Jesus' disciples gathered behind closed doors because they were afraid. As yet they had little time to ponder the reports of Peter, John and Mary of Magdala that the Lord had risen from the dead.

Suddenly, Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them “Peace be with you”, and immediately *their fear was turned to joy*.

Like those first disciples, *we too can experience this transformation*.

All our fears can be turned to joy by the presence of the Risen Lord who comes to us in a special way in this Sacred Liturgy. His words to the disciples, “Peace be with you”, are now addressed to us.

His visible presence among them is equally real to us in the celebration of the Eucharist.

2. What are the causes of humanity’s fears? The prayers and readings of today’s Mass express a yearning for justice and peace. It is precisely the *absence of justice and peace*, in our lives and in the world, that so often troubles us and arouses our fears. We know that the vision of the Prophet Micah remains unfulfilled: Nation still lifts sword against nation. There is much training for war. So many of our brothers and sisters throughout the world long to sit untroubled in the shade of their vine and fig tree, as the Prophet says, but are prevented from doing so.

The Second Vatican Council tells us that the causes of discord in the world are many. These include excessive *economic inequalities* and a lack of resolve to apply the needed remedies. There is also the desire for power, a disregard for others, and at a deeper level, *envy, mistrust, pride and selfish passions* (Cfr. *Gaudium et Spes*, 83). The Council also speaks of fears that arise from within ourselves, from our *self-doubts and questioning*, our failures and anxieties, our groping for authentic human development and freedom, and above all from *the reality of sin* (cfr. *ibid.* 4.10.21).

3. The Church does not claim to have a ready answer or a simple solution for every problem or fear that besets the human family. But today, dear brothers and sisters, we gather together in the conviction that “fear is driven out by perfect love” (1 *Jo* 4.18). We proclaim and celebrate the fact that perfect love has been revealed in Jesus Christ. In him *God has reconciled the world to himself* and has given us the gift of peace through the power of the Holy Spirit. And what is more, God has entrusted the *ministry of reconciliation* to us, his Church: “The disciples were filled with joy when they saw the Lord, and he said to them again, ‘Peace be with you’. ‘As the Father sent me, so I am sending you’... Receive the Holy Spirit. For those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven; for those whose sins you retain, they are retained” (*Jo* 20, 20-23). *Forgiveness*, then, is the key that unlocks the door to peace – the forgiveness that Christ won for us on the Cross. As Saint Paul tells us: “God wanted... all things to be reconciled through him and for him, everything in heaven and everything on earth, when he made peace by his Death on the Cross” (*Col* 1, 19-20).

In today’s Gospel the Risen Lord appears to his disciples as the *Crucified one*: “He said to them, ‘Peace be with you’, and showed them his hands and his side” (*Jo* 20, 19-20). He showed them the marks of his suffering, the marks of his perfect love. It was very fitting then that we began this liturgy with the presentation of the Cross by the youth of Botswana. They have carried it throughout the land as a sign of their willingness to imitate their Lord and to obey him. For those who have faith, the Cross is no longer an instrument of fear and death, but *a trophy of life and peace*. We are called to take up the Cross every day “so that (God) may teach us his ways and we may walk in his paths” in accordance with the vision of the Prophet Micah (*Mic.* 4, 2). At the same time we recognize that God’s thoughts are not our

thoughts, his ways are not our ways (Cfr. *Is. 55,8*). The Cross reminds us of our need for conversion, our need to turn away from sin and believe in the Gospel. *True justice and peace depend on conversion*, which requires a daily effort on the part of every person to live the Gospel faithfully in the face of temptations and of obstacles.

4. The reconciliation of all human beings with God and with each other which Christ accomplished on the Cross is at the heart of *every celebration of the sacraments*. As we read in one of our liturgical texts, “From (Christ’s) wounded side flowed blood and water, the fountain of sacramental life in the Church” (Praef. “Sacri Cordis”). Dear brothers and sisters: we cannot emphasize enough the importance of this sacramental life. Sacraments make us *sharers in the reconciliation and communion* that are essential for our own peace and for the peace of the world. They strengthen us for the daily struggle to turn away from sin and to believe in the Gospel. They nourish us with the very life of God. For the Christian community the forgiveness of Christ comes to us in a special way through Baptism and the Sacrament of Penance.

5. Sacramental life, in its deepest sense, is *the very heart of the Church in Botswana*, as it is for every local Church. The first missionaries had a burning desire to bring to this land a new life in Christ both by word and sacrament. Their witness to the Gospel was inseparable from their commitment to justice and peace and from their vision of a world reconciled and redeemed. The sacraments not only sustained them, but also made their labours fruitful in the lives of your forebears and in the lives of each of you today, for we know that as actions of Christ, sacraments bring about what they signify; they are alive with the power of God.

Each of you has responded to God’s offer of reconciliation and peace by your *faith and baptism* and by your *commitment to participate* in the Church’s sacramental life.

The desire to bring others to full participation in Christ’s saving mysteries has not been limited to the clergy and religious of Botswana. Mention must be made of the *first catechists* who travelled tirelessly from village to village in order to teach and instruct those preparing to receive the Eucharist, so that they might be fully initiated into the Church. *Today* many people continue to give of their time to *help instruct both children and adults* for baptism. Efforts are likewise made to deepen the faith of those who hold responsible positions in the Church and in society. There are also those lay people who, from the very beginning until now, have opened their homes to the community for the celebration of the sacraments so that their brothers and sisters could be nourished by Christ’s Body and Blood. In all of these ways, both in the past and in the present, the life of the Church in Botswana has centred on sacramental participation in Christ’s Paschal Mystery.

The Mass which we celebrate today is indeed a very special and historic occasion. It is a great joy for me, the shepherd whom Christ has appointed for the whole Church, to offer his Eucharistic Sacrifice with all of you – the clergy, religious and laity of Botswana. Through communion with your bishop and with the Successor of Saint Peter, you are united with every other local Church in *bonds of unity, charity, and peace*, as this liturgy so beautifully expresses. At the same time, I know that the deep faith and Christian commitment that fill this stadium today are much more than passing sentiments. They arise from living the Gospel every day, humbly and without fanfare, and are nourished by faithful participation in the Church’s sacramental life.

Dear brothers and sisters: *never lose your love for these divine gifts* which confer new life in Christ. When you fall into sin, do not fail to seek pardon and peace in the *Sacrament of Penance*, remembering that “God the Father of Mercies, through the Death and Resurrection of his Son, has reconciled the world to himself and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins” (“Ritus Poenitentiae”). You must frequently nourish your heart and soul on Christ’s body and blood in the *Eucharist*, for he tells us. “If you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood you will not have life in you. Anyone who does eat my flesh and drink my blood has eternal life, and I shall raise him up on the last day” (*Io* 6, 53-54).

6. The world in which we live presents *many challenges* to those who seek to be ministers of reconciliation, promoters of justice, and builders of peace. The lack of justice and peace is an obstacle to authentic human development; an obstacle that can be overcome only by a firm commitment on the part of Christians and all people of good will to work for a more just and peaceful world, both nationally and internationally. But we must also remember that reconciliation begins with our own *conversion*, and grows within the intimate circle of those with whom we live and work every day. This applies in a special way to *marriage and family life*. As I stated in my Apostolic Exhortation “*Familiaris Consortio*”: “The family is the first and fundamental school of social living: as a community of love, it finds in selfgiving the law that guides it and makes it grow”... (*Familiaris Consortio*, 37). “The spiritual communion between Christian families... constitutes an inner energy that generates, spreads and develops justice, reconciliation, fraternity and peace among human beings” (*Ibid.* 48).

Like many other people in the world today, you are experiencing a *weakening* in your country of many *traditional customs* and safeguards surrounding marriage and the extended family. Sometimes there is a clash of ideas between spouses as to their proper relation to each other. Young people do not always accept the values of their parents. Economic factors, especially the need to find work, also take their toll on family life. Among Catholics there is an increased acceptance of divorce. Those in mixed marriages are sometimes tempted to abandon their faith.

In the face of these difficulties we must not be timid or afraid, like the disciples in the Gospel who at first remained locked behind closed doors. Remember how their fear was turned to joy by the presence of the Risen Lord. “Peace be with you” he told them. “As the Father sent me, so I am sending you” (*Io* 20, 21). If the Risen Lord is with you, you need not be afraid. *Do not be afraid*, then, *of the demands of love*, especially the demands of married love. For the love which makes demands is the same love which leads to life and to the fullness of joy in the Lord. Confident of God’s help, we must seek to preserve the dignity of marriage by upholding its *sacredness and indissolubility* in accordance with the Church’s teaching, which is the teaching of Christ.

There are many dimensions to our Christian witness concerning marriage. The whole Church in Botswana must work to *prepare couples before marriage*, and to encourage and help them afterwards through prayer, retreats and other efforts which deepen their appreciation of this sacrament. A special effort must be made to help those couples and families who are experiencing difficulties. Young people, in particular, need *encouragement to act responsibly* and to show true Christian love for one another based on self-control and mutual respect.

7. I appeal to all the young men and women of Botswana: Do not allow yourselves to be misled by a *false permissiveness* that appears to be freedom, but is really slavery. Always remember that true freedom means *being able to choose what is right and good*, and not what

is one's pleasure. It is freedom from selfishness and sin. Do not allow materialism and consumerism to impoverish your souls to the detriment of married love and family life. Remember, too, that you are not just individuals, in competition for selfish aims. As part of the human family and as members of God's holy people, you are called to work with others for the good of all. Only in this way can you fulfil your mission as followers of Christ, "who did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many" (*Marc* 10, 45).

This call to service also includes the *priesthood and religious life*, vocations of vital importance to the life and mission of the Church. As you think of your future, do not exclude the possibility that God may be calling you to serve his people as a priest, or as a Brother or Sister. I ask all the Catholic people, and parents in particular, to pray for an increase in these vocations among your sons and daughters, your neighbours and friends. Be generous in encouraging them to follow the Lord along these paths in accordance with his will.

8. In today's liturgy we have heard the Psalmist proclaim: "I will hear what the Lord God has to say, a voice that speaks of peace, peace for his people and his friends and those who turn to him in their hearts... Justice shall march before him and peace shall follow his steps" (*Ps* 85 [84], 13).

My brothers and sisters of Botswana: through Baptism you became members of God's holy people. By turning your hearts to him in Christian living and the sacraments, you grow in his grace, his friendship.

In your search for justice and peace, listen to "what the Lord God has to say". Follow in Christ's footsteps *without fear*: Christ who is our reconciliation; Christ who is God the Father's *word of peace* to us: Christ Crucified and Risen from the dead.

"Justice shall march before *him* and peace shall follow *his* steps" (*Ibid.* 18). Amen.

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### **ACT OF ENTRUSTMENT TO MARY AT THE CONCLUSION OF MASS**

Holy Mother, Mother of the Church, Mother of all humanity: I, John Paul the Second, entrust the *land and people of Botswana* to your loving care.

Through your maternal intercession, may this *local Church* grow in holiness and grace, and may its *benefactors* be blessed for their kindness and generosity.

I entrust to you *Bishop Setlalekgosi* and all the *clergy and religious* of the Diocese of Gaborone. May they be filled with apostolic zeal and compassion, and may they grow in their love of what is unseen, so that their witness to God's kingdom will be strong and fruitful. Intercede for this Church, Blessed Lady, that it may be enriched by an increase of *vocations* to the priesthood and to religious life. Help all those who aspire to these special vocations to persevere if God has truly called them.

Our Lady of Perpetual Help, I entrust to you all the laity of Botswana. You know how they desire to be faithful to their baptismal promises to turn away from sin and to believe in the Gospel. Lead them to an ever greater love for your Son, Jesus Christ. Sustain them in their daily efforts to be the “salt of the earth and the light of the world” (Cfr. *Matth.* 5, 13-14) so that they may lead others to salvation.

Be present to the *catechists* of Botswana. May they learn knowledge and understanding from you as they seek to deepen the faith of others. Turn your loving glance to all who *teach* in the Catholic schools, to all who *minister to the sick* in Catholic health care facilities, to all the *laity in every walk of life* who seek to build up God’s kingdom in this country and throughout the world.

Immaculate Virgin Mary, I entrust to you in a special way all *husbands and wives*. May their marriage and family life be for them a path to holiness and joy. May their sons and daughters, the young people, who are the future of the Church and of Botswana, be delivered from all temptation and harm, and always remain faithful to Christ.

Holy Mother of our Redeemer, inspire the hearts of all the faithful with an ever greater love for the sacramental life of the Church, especially the Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist. Lead back those who have *fallen away* from the practice of the faith to full participation in your Son’s Paschal Mystery.

O Mary, Mother of Compassion, I entrust to you all *those who have experienced trial and suffering* in their lives, whether moral, spiritual or physical. May their patient endurance help to further the redemptive work of your Son. Give help and fresh courage to the homeless and unemployed, to those whose family life is troubled, and to the men, women and children who have known the sorrow of broken homes. I entrust to you all those whose lives demand special respect and care: *the unborn, the handicapped, the sick, the elderly and the dying*.

Look with kindness, Holy Mother, upon *all the people of Botswana, whom I entrust to you today*. Help them to work for that development which is truly human and at the service of the dignity and rights of every person. May they never lose their respect for religion and religious freedom.

Queen of Peace, preserve this land in domestic peace. Give wisdom to *leaders* in society and government, so that all the citizens of Botswana may live in *freedom, justice, peace and true prosperity*, now and in the days to come. Amen.

## **HOLY MASS IN THE PRO-CATHEDRAL OF ROMA (LESOTHO)**

### ***HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II***

*Feast of the Triumph of the Cross  
Wednesday, 14 September 1988*

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

1. Today it is my great joy to be together with you, the faithful of the Church in Lesotho, on *the feast of the Triumph of the Cross*, celebrating the Eucharistic Liturgy which in the Cross of Christ has its beginning and source.

I give thanks to God for the privilege of being here *in Roma* where Father Joseph Gérard served Christ for many years. In the love of Jesus, I offer cordial greetings to my brother bishop and to the priests and religious of this beloved country, as well as to those from other lands. In a special way, I greet the parents and their children, the families of Lesotho who form the primary communities of society and of the Church. I welcome the catechists and teachers who perform such a vital role in the work of evangelization in this mountainous and rugged land, and I offer warm greetings to the various Lay Associations: to the members of the Legion of Mary, the Saint Cecilia Association, the Ladies of Saint Ann and the Men of the Sacred Heart.

I also extend a warm welcome to our brothers and sisters in Christ from other Churches and Ecclesial Communities and to all those of good will who have wished to join us today in prayer.

2. In the Gospel of this feast we are *witnesses* of an unusual *conversation* between *Jesus and Nicodemus*. The conversation takes place at night because Nicodemus, a prominent Jew, went to talk with Christ under the cover of darkness. Christ leads this man, a teacher, *to the very heart of the mystery revealed by God*. It is the mystery of the Son of God who descended from heaven and, as the Son of Man, accomplished the messianic mission among the people of Israel.

*This mission was directed towards “the lifting up” of Christ on the Cross*. Jesus says to Nicodemus: “The Son of Man must be lifted up as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert” (Io. 3, 14). *Nicodemus knows the Scriptures* well; he knows the inspired message of the Old Testament. He can recall the event that took place during the journey of the chosen people in the desert. At the command of Yahweh, “Moses fashioned a bronze serpent which he put on a standard” (Nu. 21, 9).

*This bronze serpent would restore to health* and save the lives of the Israelites who had been bitten by the serpents. They were serpents with a poisonous venom; after being bitten by them many Israelites died. But the serpent made of bronze and placed on a high standard *would become a means of salvation*: whoever looked at it would live.

3. Jesus continues: “*The Son of Man must be lifted up*... so that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him” (Io. 3, 14-15). The human family had received at the very beginning of earthly history a deadly bite from the “ancient serpent”. He had injected a satanic venom – the venom of original sin – into the souls of the first man and woman. And from that time onward, man’s history on earth has been burdened by sin. A tendency towards sin has generated many evils in the lives of individual persons and the communities to which they belong, in families, in entire peoples and nations.

“*The Son of Man must be lifted up*”, says Jesus to Nicodemus. And he says this with a view to his crucifixion: The Son of Man must be lifted up on the Cross. Whoever believes in him, whoever sees in this Cross and in the Crucified One the Redeemer of the world, whoever looks with faith on the redemptive death of Jesus on the Cross, finds in him the power of



eternal life. By this power, sin is overcome. People receive forgiveness of their sins at the price of the Sacrifice of Christ. They find again the life of God which had been lost by sin.

4. *This is the meaning of the Cross of Christ. This is its power.* “God sent his Son into the world not to condemn the world, but so that through him the world might be saved” (Io. 3, 17).

The feast that we celebrate today speaks of a marvellous and ceaseless action of God in human history, in the history of every man, woman and child. The Cross of Christ on Golgotha has become for all time the centre of this saving work of God. *Christ is the Saviour of the world*, because in him and through him the *love with which God so loved the world* is continuously revealed: “God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son” (Ibid. 3, 16).

– The Father *gave him* so that this Son, who is one in substance with him, would become man by being conceived of the Virgin Mary.

– The Father *gave him* so that as the Son of Man he would proclaim the Gospel, the Good News of salvation.

– The Father *gave him* so that this Son, by responding with his own infinite love to the love of the Father, might offer himself on the Cross.

5. From a human point of view, Christ’s *offering of himself on the Cross was a sign of contradiction*, an unthinkable disgrace. It was, in fact, *the most profound humiliation possible*.

In today’s liturgy, *the Apostle Paul* speaks to us in words that capture the mystery of the Cross of Christ: “His state was divine, yet he did not cling to his equality with God but emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave, and became as men are; and being as all men are, he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a Cross. *But God raised him high*” (Phil. 2, 6-9).

*Through his self-emptying on Golgotha*, in the disgrace of the Cross and the crucifixion (at least in the human way of understanding these events) Christ receives the highest exaltation. In God’s eyes, the Cross is the greatest triumph. The way of human judgement is very different from God’s. God’s judgement far surpasses ours. What seems to us to be failure is, in God’s eyes, the victory of sacrificial love.

It is precisely this Cross of human disgrace that bears within itself the source of the exaltation of Christ in God.

“God raised him high and gave him the name which is above all other names so that all beings in the heavens, on earth and in the underworld, should bend the knee at the name of Jesus and that every tongue should acclaim *Jesus Christ as Lord, to the glory of God the Father*” (Ibid. 2, 9-11).

*To the eyes of the Apostles this was revealed through the Resurrection of Christ.* At that moment they understood that Christ is the Lord, that he has been given all power in heaven and on earth. At that moment their eyes and their hearts were opened, so that the lips of Thomas could profess: “My Lord and My God”! (Io. 20, 28). And once they had come to



believe, through the power of the Spirit of Truth, *they were ready to go forth into the whole world* to teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Cfr. *Matth.* 28, 19).

6. Yes, it is through the Cross that Christ is exalted. Today's feast of the Church speaks to us of this mystery. At the same time, it speaks of *Christ who by means of the Cross lifts up humanity, lifts up all humanity and indeed all creation*. "For God sent his Son into the world not to condemn the world, but so that through him the world might be saved" (*Io.* 3, 17).

Being "saved" means that every man and woman can be healed of the sin that poisoned the human family and all history. Jesus says to his Apostles after his Resurrection: "Those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven". And as he says it he shows them the wounds of his crucifixion, to let them know that it is precisely in the Cross that the power to forgive sins is hidden, the power to heal consciences and human hearts.

Generation after generation passes. And in the midst of this passing, the Cross of Christ remains. Through the Cross, God continuously proclaims to the world the infinite love which no created evil is able to overcome. Yes, the Cross remains, so that in it the world, indeed every human person, may find the way of salvation. *For it is by this Cross that the world is saved!*

7. By this one holy Cross *the people of Lesotho* are saved. For more than a hundred years, the message of the Cross has been proclaimed here in your land. The power of the Cross has been uplifting and enriching your culture, enhancing human dignity, overcoming sin and division, touching your own lives as it did the lives of your forebears, with the healing mercy of God.

*The Cross of Christ has indeed triumphed* among the Basotho people. The Christian faith has taken root and brought forth abundant fruit. And yet *evangelization must continue*. The Good News of Christ's Death and Resurrection must be constantly proclaimed anew, for the Church always needs to be built up in faith and charity. In a particular way, *marriage and family life* must be strengthened, first by preaching the real nature of Christian marriage, and then by working to overcome the false ideas and practices of society which damage human dignity and hinder the fidelity of husband and wife. This is especially urgent in a community which has to bear the strains and stresses of the absence of many fathers of families who are compelled by economic circumstances to seek employment outside the borders of Lesotho.

Educators and Catholic lay associations can make an invaluable contribution in the task of evangelization. Precisely as lay people, under the guidance of, and in collaboration with, the clergy and religious, they fulfil a vital role of handing on the Church's great patrimony of doctrinal and moral truths. They bear witness to the Gospel of Christ by serving the poor and working for justice. And given the special role of the Church in the field of education in this Kingdom, teachers have a unique opportunity of forming their pupils in the love and knowledge of Jesus Christ. That is why the University of Roma, which was founded by the Catholic Church, has been such a blessing in this country. May those of you who have attended this University and benefited from higher education always use this precious gift to serve your brothers and sisters and build up the Body of Christ.

8. The Church in Lesotho today meditates on this wondrous mystery of the Triumph of the Cross and *proclaims to all people in the words of the Psalmist*: "Give heed, my people, to my teaching; turn your ear to *the words of my mouth*" (*Ps.* 78 (77), 1).

And the greatest word that God has ever spoken to humanity through his only-begotten Son is the Cross, *the word of the Cross*. It was in this sign that the faith came to this land; it is a sign that one meets along mountain roads and the deepest valleys.

People of Lesotho, my brothers and sisters in Christ: Let us never forget the Cross, the *triumphant* Cross.

Let us never forget the works of the Lord! (Cfr. *Ps.* 78 (77), 7). Amen.

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### *Prayer before the tomb of Fr Joseph Gérard*

God our Father,  
all creation praises you,  
all people delight in your presence.  
You guide the course of history,  
you govern all nations with order and mercy.

In your loving providence,  
you called your servant, Joseph Gérard,  
to imitate your only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ,  
to follow him more closely in chastity, poverty and obedience,  
and to proclaim the Good News of salvation  
in South Africa and in the Kingdom of Lesotho.

O Father of tenderness and love,  
at this tomb of Joseph Gérard, we recall with gratitude  
how you blessed your servant with a faithful spirit of prayer  
that he might constantly walk in your gentle presence  
and pour out his life in generous service of others.

You filled him with wisdom and apostolic zeal  
that he might enlighten minds with the truth of the Gospel.

You gave your chosen one the gift of compassion  
that, he might offer comfort to the sick, hope to the dying,  
and charity to all.

On this vigil of his beatification  
we thank you, heavenly Father, Source of all holiness,  
for the Gospel witness of Father Joseph Gérard.

By the help of his prayers  
give us purity of heart,  
strengthen us in faith,  
keep us firm in hope,  
inspire us to imitate his example of love.

Bless the Church in this land  
with renewed vigour in serving you,  
with fresh enthusiasm for evangelization,  
so that always and in everything  
your Name may be blessed and adored.

This we ask through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

## BEATIFICATION OF FATHER JOSEPH GÉRARD

### *HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II*

*Maseru Race Course (Lesotho)  
Thursday, 15 September 1988*

*"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord" (Luc. 1, 46).*

*Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,*

1. On the day after the feast of the Triumph of the Cross of Christ the liturgy of the Church directs our attention *towards her who is found at the foot of the Cross*, to the Mother of Christ, Mary.

She stood at the foot of the Cross together with three other women and with John, the disciple whom Christ loved. The Second Vatican Council teaches us that Mary is found there, at the foot of the Cross, "in keeping with the divine plan" (*Lumen Gentium*, 58).

Indeed *in a certain sense this was the climax* in her life's pilgrimage, the moment *for which the Holy Spirit had been preparing her throughout her entire existence and especially from the time of the Annunciation*. It was the culmination of her pilgrimage of faith, of hope and of that special union with Jesus, her Son, the Redeemer of the world.

At the beginning of this pilgrimage, we hear Mary say *in the house of her kinswoman Elizabeth*, when she speaks of the great things the Almighty has done for her: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord". *At the foot of the Cross*, "a sword pierces Mary's soul", fulfilling the words of Simeon (Cfr. *Luc. 2, 35*).

And yet, *Mary does not cease to believe. The great works of God are accomplished precisely through this Cross*, through the Sacrifice of the life of her Son. And united to the redemptive Sacrifice of her Son is the maternal sacrifice of her heart.

2. The Church leads us today into *the very centre of the Heart of Mary*, into the intimate mystery of her union with her Son, a union which here, at the foot of the Cross, reaches its particular fullness.

In the Letter to the Hebrews we read that Christ, while being Son of God, one in being with the Father, “*learned to obey through suffering*” (Hebr 5, 8). And precisely through this obedience even to death on the Cross “*he became for all who obey him the source of eternal salvation*” (Ibid 5, 9).

At the moment of the Annunciation Mary first spoke her “*fiat*”.

She said: “Let what you have said be done to me”. And with new strength of faith and trust in God she repeated this “*fiat*” *at the foot of the Cross!* This was her maternal sharing in the redemptive obedience of her Son as he offered his life on the Cross for the sins of the world.

At the foot of the Cross Mary never ceased to praise the wondrous mercy of God, the mercy which endures “*from generation to generation*”. And she did not cease to proclaim the saving “power of his arm”, which puts down the proud and raises the lowly. Like no other person on earth, *Mary was able to penetrate the Paschal Mystery of Christ*; she understood it with her heart.

3. And therefore the Church sees the Mother of God as the one who “*preceded in the pilgrimage of faith*” all the People of God on earth. In this faith she became a true daughter of Abraham; indeed she even surpassed him whom Saint Paul calls “the Father of all believers” (Rom. 4, 11). Her pilgrimage of faith has done something even greater: it has enabled us to enter ever more profoundly into the inscrutable mysteries of God.

*The Church in your country*, in Lesotho, here in Maseru, as does the Church throughout the earth, *goes forward on this same pilgrimage of faith*, the pilgrimage on which the Mother of God has gone before us. Today the Bishop of Rome meets you on this pilgrimage. He stands in your midst and celebrates with you the Eucharistic Sacrifice on the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows.

4. It is with great joy that I join you in prayer today, my brothers and sisters of *the Church in Lesotho*. I know that many of you have had to make many sacrifices in order to be here, and I assure you of my happiness and gratitude that you have come. Your presence at this Liturgy is a sign of your love for the Church and an expression of your willingness to bear witness to the Kingdom of Christ.

I am also aware that many people would have liked to be with us, but have been unable to do so: the sick and suffering, those who live too far away, those who are too young or too old. To all of them I say with deep affection: *the Pope embraces you and loves you in the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ our Redeemer*.

My fraternal greetings go to Archbishop Morapeli of Maseru and to the bishops of the other dioceses of Lesotho. With them, I greet all your dedicated priests and religious, your catechists, and all the members of your Christian families.

I greet our non-Catholic brothers and sisters in Christ and all people of good will, and I thank you for joining us on this historic occasion. I offer very cordial greetings to those who have come from beyond the borders of this country.

In a very special way, I greet the people of South Africa where Blessed Joseph Gérard laboured in Natal and the eastern Free State.

As members of one family, united in the love of Jesus, we rejoice today in the everlasting mercy of God who has granted us the gift of faith and made us a people of hope, a people on pilgrimage to the eternal Kingdom of God.

5. This day has a particular significance for the journey of faith which the Church in Lesotho is making. *For today we celebrate the Beatification of the Servant of God, Joseph Gérard.*

In the First Reading of the Liturgy, taken from the book of Genesis, we hear *God calling Abraham* to set out on a journey of faith, to set out on a road that will take him away from all that he has ever known and loved, *to put all his trust in the promise of the Lord.*

Father Gérard heard God addressing to him a similar call of faith. As in the case of Abraham, the Lord said to the young Frenchman named Joseph, *“Leave your country, your family and your father’s house, for the land I will show you”* (Gen. 12, 1). And he went promptly, as the Lord told him. He followed God’s call. He placed all his trust in the promise he had heard from on high.

The land that God showed Blessed Joseph was *Africa*, more precisely the land of South Africa, and then some years later the land of the Basotho people. To this land, this *Kingdom of Lesotho*, he came as a man of faith. He came because he had been called and sent to proclaim the Kingdom of God.

6. From an early age, Joseph Gérard had been convinced that God was calling him to be a *missionary*. His heart overflowed with gratitude for the gift of the Christian life, and he longed to share with others this treasure, this priceless pearl, the infinite riches of knowing Jesus Christ. And it was this *constant zeal for evangelization* that shaped every stage of his long life.

Upon his arrival in Lesotho together with Bishop Allard and Brother Bernard he at once set about learning the language and customs of the Basotho people. He tried to understand their way of thinking, their sensitivities, their hopes and desires. He was *eager to understand their very souls*, so that he could decide on the best methods to use in preaching to them the Good News of salvation.

Father Gérard and his companions *began their apostolic work at the mission called Roma*. They gave themselves wholeheartedly and sacrificially to the task, *relying completely on the grace of the Holy Spirit*. And the Spirit of God soon brought forth fruit. Only a few years later, in 1866, a second mission at Korokoro was established. And in 1868 yet a third mission dedicated to Saint Michael was begun.

In obedience to his superior, Father Gérard went to the northern part of the country in 1876, where he founded the mission of Saint Monica. For the next twenty years and more he laboured there untiringly, establishing a convent and school, and building other missions in

the surrounding area. In all his pastoral endeavours and plans, *he placed all his hope in God*, remembering the words spoken at his priestly ordination, namely that God who began the good work in him would bring it to completion.

Wherever Blessed Joseph Gérard went, he lived his missionary vocation with extraordinary apostolic fervour. *His love for God*, which burned ever more ardently in his heart, *showed itself* in practical love of neighbour. Above all he is remembered for his special care for the sick and suffering. Through frequent visits and his gentle manner, he always seemed to bring them fresh courage and hope. For those near the hour of death he found the right words to prepare them to meet God peacefully, face to face.

The secret of his holiness, the key to his joy and zeal, was the simple fact that he lived *continually in the presence of God*. Blessed Joseph's whole life was caught up in the love of the Holy Trinity. People wanted to be near to Father Gérard because he always seemed near to God. He was filled with a spirit of prayer, nourished daily by the Liturgy of the Hours and by frequent visits to the Blessed Sacrament. He had a fervent devotion to the Mother of God and the Saints. During his long and difficult journeys to outlying missions and the homes of the sick, he conversed continually with his beloved Lord. It is undoubtedly this vivid sense of being always in the presence of God that explains his lifelong fidelity to his religious vows of chastity, poverty and obedience and to his obligations as a priest.

God blessed Father Gérard with a long life of apostolic service. He granted him the grace to see *over half a century of the unfolding evangelization of Lesotho*. Father Gérard is certainly rejoicing today at the vitality of the Church in this country which was so dear to his heart: its bishops are native sons, there is an increasing number of vocations to the priesthood and religious life, the active laity numbers more than six hundred thousand people, including a hundred and forty thousand studying in Catholic schools. But with his missionary spirit, would he not still encourage us today to carry on with fresh enthusiasm the many-sided task of proclaiming the Gospel of Christ?

7. Here in Lesotho you have a traditional greeting: *Khotso, Pula, Nala*, – peace, rain and abundance. Blessed Joseph Gérard must have often prayed for these same blessings, he must have often uttered this same greeting in this land. Above all, he always tried to be *a servant of reconciliation and peace*, for this is an essential part of evangelization.

*To evangelize means to proclaim the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ*, the Saviour of the whole world, to tell the story of how “God wanted all perfection to be found in him and *all things to be reconciled through him and for him*, everything in heaven and everything on earth, by his death on the Cross” (Col. 1, 19-20). The first step of evangelization is *to accept the grace of conversion* into our own minds and hearts, to let ourselves be reconciled to God. We must first experience God's gracious mercy, the love of Christ which has “reconciled us to himself” and given us “the work of handing on this reconciliation” (2Cor. 5-18).

As the twentieth century draws to a close and as your country looks to the future, this is the special gift and the greatest responsibility which the members of the Church offer to their fellow citizens, to be servants of reconciliation and peace, after the example of Blessed Joseph Gérard.

*Always believe in the power of love and truth*: the love of neighbour which is rooted in the love of God and the truth which sets people free. Reject violence as a solution to any

situation, no matter how unjust it may be. Put your trust in the methods that respect the rights of all and that are fully in accordance with the Gospel. Above all, trust in the God of justice, who created all things, who sees all human events, who holds in his hands the destiny of every person and of every nation.

8. Dear brothers and sisters: *I rejoice with you on this solemn day of celebration.* It is a day of great importance in your pilgrimage of faith and hope, a day of jubilation on the journey to union with Christ which the People of God in this land are making. *Let us give thanks to the most holy God* for this day. Let us sing, together with Mary: “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord and my spirit exults in God my Saviour” (*Luc. 1, 46-47*).

Together with Mary and with Blessed Joseph Gérard, let all the people of Lesotho exult in God our Saviour. Yes, all of you: young and old, children and parents, workers and teachers, priests and religious, the handicapped and the sick. Let us all praise the Lord with grateful voices, for the Almighty has done great things for us. Holy is his name!

9. Yet, at the same time, *let the eyes of our faith never wander from the Cross of Calvary.*

We read in the Gospel: “Seeing his mother and the disciple he loved standing near her, Jesus said to his mother, ‘Woman, this is your son’. Then to the disciple he said, ‘This is your mother’. And from that moment the disciple made a place for her in his home” (*Io. 19, 26-27*).

My fervent wish for all of you, dear brothers and sisters, is *that the word of John’s Gospel may be fulfilled in you.*

May each of you discover Mary as your Mother.

May each of you seek to be *a son, a daughter, of Mary*, who at the foot of the Cross becomes in a particular way for us the “Mother of Divine Grace”.

May each of you “*make a place for her in your home*”, and even more so in your heart, every day and throughout your life, especially at those times of trial and suffering.

May the memory of this blessed day be inscribed for ever in the history of this city and this country, in the history of the whole continent of Africa.

Blessed Joseph Gérard, pray for us; lead us to Jesus through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, our Mother in faith. Amen.

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### *Act of entrustment to Mary*

O Mary, Mother of our Redeemer, Mother of the Church, at the end of this celebration of the Eucharist, we turn to you with confidence and love. On this feast of Our Lady of Sorrows, we remember your own sharing in the suffering and death of Christ your Son.

O Mother of Sorrows, it was precisely at the hour of your Son's death that you became by a new title our Mother, Mother of all the faithful. For your loving Son said to you, as you stood at the foot of the Cross, "Woman, this is your son!".

From that moment onwards and throughout the course of human history, you are the Mother not only of the beloved disciple but of every member of the Church. You are our gentle Mother. You care for us all as your dear children. In fact, you see in each of us the face of your beloved Jesus And you intercede with him on our behalf, for our good and the Redemption of the world.

Today, dearest Mother, I entrust to you all those present at this Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and all the people living in this mountain Kingdom. I entrust them to you with complete confidence and love.

O Mother of Sorrows, I bring before you the sick and the elderly and all who are burdened by sin. I know they will find in you a safe harbour and a consoling help. You will bring them tenderly but surely to the foot of the Triumphant Cross.

O Immaculate Heart of Mary, so filled with love for your Son, I entrust to you the youth of Lesotho in whose eyes the future shines. Protect them from the evil one. Enable them to see that only your Son is "the Way and the Truth and the Life", only in him is there a future full of hope and a life truly founded on love.

O Blessed Virgin of Nazareth, I place before you the families of the Basotho people, all married couples who with their children are called to form a lifelong communion of love. Keep them pure and chaste, ever faithful to one another, always faithful, as you were, to the life-giving word of God.

O Mary, Model of holiness and first disciple of your Son, I entrust to your gentle care the Church in Lesotho. As it rejoices in a century and a quarter of evangelization and in the beatification of Father Joseph Gérard, lead your sons and daughters in the way of constant conversion, along the path of spiritual renewal. Pray for this local Church, so dear to the Successor of Peter, so dear to your own Immaculate Heart. Help our brothers and sisters to come to believe with conviction what you believed at the foot of the Cross: that human death is not the final word, for the final word belongs to God, the God of love and mercy, the God who has saved the world through the victorious Cross of your Son. Amen.

## **HOLY MASS IN THE "SOMHLOLO STADIUM" OF MBABANE**

### ***HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II***

*Mbabane (Swaziland)  
Friday, 16 September 1988*



*"Listen! You are to conceive and bear a Son,  
and you must name him Jesus...  
his reign will have no end" (Luc. 1, 31. 33).*

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

1. Today we come together *in the name of Jesus Christ*, the eternal King, whose reign will have no end: "Justice shall march before him and peace shall follow his steps" (Ps. 85 (84), 13).

We present ourselves to him, *the King of Peace*. His kingdom of peace is also one of grace and truth, of justice and love. And *his Mother*, the Virgin of Nazareth, tells the angel at the Annunciation, "I am the handmaid of the Lord" (Luc. 1, 38). It is precisely *as the Lord's handmaid* that she participates in the kingship of her Son. That is why she is the Queen of Peace.

2. I know that here in Swaziland the Church has come to have a special veneration for Mary under the title "*Queen of Peace*". In my joy at being among you, I too wish to join in this veneration of Christ's Mother. In this spirit, and *uniting myself to the whole Church in Swaziland*, I offer *heartfelt greetings to you who are assembled here* for this memorable celebration and to *all the people* of your beautiful country during this year in which you celebrated the twentieth anniversary of national independence.

I greet most respectfully His Majesty King Mswati III and Her Majesty the Queen Mother. With them, I greet as well the distinguished members of your Government. I extend fraternal greetings in Christ to Bishop Ndlovu, to the priests and religious of Swaziland and to all the members of the catholic Church in your country, I also greet those present who belong to other Ecclesial Communities or to non-Christian religions. To all of you go my greetings in the love of God.

3. Today's first reading from Sacred Scripture helps us to understand better what we mean when we say that Christ is the King of Peace. Saint Paul tells us that "*God in Christ was reconciling the world to himself*" (2Cor. 5, 19). This reconciliation was accomplished through Christ's redeeming *Sacrifice on the Cross*, and it is the basis of the peace that fills Christ's kingdom. It is a reconciliation that cannot be destroyed. *It remains for ever fruitful* as a source of reconciliation and peace for the whole human race.

Christ's work of reconciliation transforms us from within. It *frees us from selfishness and sin*, and confers upon us a *new life* in him. As Saint Paul tells us, "God in Christ was reconciling the world to himself, *not holding men's faults against them*" (Ibid.); "... the reason (Christ) *died for all* was so that living men should live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised to life for them" (Ibid. 5, 15). "... *For anyone who is in Christ, there is a new creation*" (Ibid. 5, 17).

Christ is King of Peace because he establishes a new creation and restores *the dimension of brotherhood* to human life on earth. All people are brothers and sisters to each other because God is their common Father. Christ revealed this to us by teaching us to call God "*Our Father*". This is the foundation of the peace of God's Kingdom.

4. To be sure, God alone is the source of this peace. In him we find the source of all reconciliation, human and divine. Saint Paul proclaims this when he says that “It is all *God’s work*” (2Cor. 5, 18). Yet we also know in faith that the gift of *peace is likewise a human responsibility* given to each and every one of us. Saint Paul again proclaims: “the love of Christ overwhelms us” (*Ibid.* 5, 14). God, who “in Christ was reconciling the world to himself... has entrusted to us the news that (people) are reconciled” (*Ibid.* 5, 18). And so, “we are *ambassadors for Christ*; it is as though God were appealing through us, and the appeal that we make in Christ’s name is: be reconciled to God” (*Ibid.* 5, 20). Clearly, Saint Paul knows that he is handing on a “*message of reconciliation*”. It constitutes a mission not only for his contemporaries, but for the Church throughout the ages.

5. After many centuries *this apostolic mission*, described in the Second Letter to the Corinthians and proclaimed during today’s liturgy, *reached this land* in the southern region of the African continent. What does this mission mean for us who are gathered here, for *the Church in Swaziland* and for all the people of your country? How does the apostolic “message of reconciliation” resound here with new vigour?

An ambassador is known by his credentials. He must give credible proof that he has been sent. As ambassadors of Christ we too must give *proof of our mission*. And the greatest proof is our own fidelity to the *Christian way of life*. If we are reconciled with God, with ourselves and with others, and if we in turn foster this reconciliation in society, we can make a convincing claim to be ambassadors of the King of Peace. In this way, the good news that God in Christ has reconciled the world to himself will be *credible* to those who see and hear us.

6. An important challenge today in our individual lives and in the life of society is the great need to support and strengthen *the family*, that “intimate community of life and love” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 48) which is the primary foundation of society. Today’s Gospel reminds us that Christ “who is our peace” (Eph. 2, 14) was himself a member of a family. He was the Son of Mary. Through Mary’s “yes” to God, through her loving surrender to God’s will, Jesus entered our world as a man and became a member of a human family, *the Holy Family of Nazareth*. And in so doing, he affirmed *the dignity and value of family life*.

Like the Holy Family of Nazareth, every family in Swaziland, every family in the world, is *built on love and exists for love*. As I stated in my [Apostolic Exhortation on the Role of the Family in the Modern World](#), “the family has *the mission to guard, reveal and communicate love*, and this is a living reflection of, and a real sharing in, God’s love for humanity and the love of Christ the Lord for the Church his Bride” (Ioannis Pauli PP. II, [Familiaris Consortio](#), 17).

In family life, *the love between husband and wife* is of primary importance. For if a family is to be true to its own nature as an intimate community of life and love, then husband and wife must form a loving communion of total and mutual self-giving. God our Creator has established natural complementarity and equal dignity between man and woman which facilitate and favour this communion. Furthermore, as a special source of grace, Christ instituted the *Sacrament of Matrimony* in which the Holy Spirit is poured forth on a couple to be their light and wisdom, to give them the strength to remain faithful for all of life to their marriage vows. Christian marriage, then, is characterized by *a special bond of unity and indissolubility*, for Christ gives to each couple the grace to overcome all obstacles to a lifelong and exclusive union in love.

For this reason, Christians find that a *monogamous marital union* provides the foundation upon which to build a stable family, in accordance with *the original plan of God for marriage*. “From the beginning”, God founded the marriage covenant on the *equal personal dignity* of men and women, “who in matrimony give themselves with a love that is total and therefore unique and exclusive” (Ioannis Pauli PP. II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 19). Hence, all forms of disregard for the *equal dignity of men and women* must be seen as serious contradictions of the truth that Christ, the King of Peace, has brought into the world.

At the same time, it is important to recognize the positive practices and values which strengthen and support marriage and family life. These include the worthy *traditional Swazi values and practices* that have come down to you. It has been a constant tradition of the Church to receive from various cultures everything that helps to express better the unfathomable riches of Christ. Your culture can *enrich the whole Church* to the degree that it is filled with human wisdom and enlivened by moral values (*Ibid*, 10).

7. The love of Christ and the truth of his Gospel also urge you to help those in your communities whose marriages and family life are troubled because of marital infidelity and promiscuity, drug and alcohol abuse, and the unbridled use of modern technology in ways that do not always respect the dignity of human life. These and other *social evils* are by no means confined to Swaziland. They are symptoms of the *lack of reconciliation* with God and with others that we find in individual human hearts and in whole societies in today’s world.

Despite these social ills and the suffering they cause, there is never any reason for us as Christians to be overwhelmed with discouragement; rather we should be *overwhelmed with joy at the fidelity of God*, at the Good News of *the Victory of the Cross*, at the wondrous love of our heavenly Father. In this context, for example, we recall those *grandmothers* who, when faced with broken homes and abandoned children, have lovingly reared their grandchildren and introduced them to Christian faith and sacramental life. May we *learn from these good women the power of love*, as they so generously care for the young who are the future of Swaziland.

8. Dear brothers and sisters: the search for reconciliation and peace that begins in your families must also extend to *your communities, your country and the whole human race*. Peace is *Christ’s gift* to us (Cfr. *Io.* 14, 27), but as sinners we must constantly *search for peace* and struggle to preserve it. My predecessor Paul VI called attention to an important aspect of this search when he said to us: “If you want peace, work for justice” (Pauli VI *Nuntius ob diem ad pacem fovendam dicatum pro a. D. 1972, die 8 dec. 1971: Insegnamenti di Paolo VI*, IX [1971] 1073 ss).

As Catholics, you have an important contribution to make to the building of *a more just society* for your fellow citizens. The traditional sense of justice that your ancestors have handed down to you can be *enriched by Christian revelation* to encompass a new and deeper commitment to authentic human development for all. In this regard, I want to commend you on the current efforts being made in Swaziland to ensure racial harmony, religious liberty, social welfare, and a hospitable welcome for refugees. There has also been a long-standing openness to the views of other nations. All this serves to promote *a more just and humane society* and a more peaceful world.

9. The apostolic mission to be ambassadors of reconciliation places a special obligation on all Christians to seek reconciliation *among themselves*. With all of you, *I welcome the initiatives*

that have been undertaken by ecumenical organizations on a national level, as well as the more spontaneous collaboration of Christians locally. A *true spirit of ecumenism* will not ignore the real doctrinal differences that exist among Christians, nor should it lead to indifference about our Catholic identity or the practice of our faith. But we can and should rejoice at every effort to promote Christian unity, especially as we work together for greater justice and peace.

10. My brothers and sisters in Christ: the Angel Gabriel was sent by God to the Virgin Mary to announce to her the salvation of the world: “Listen! You are to *conceive and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus*. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High... and his reign will have no end” (*Luc.* 1, 31-33).

Yes, *the reign of Christ will have no end*, even though the powers of this world will pass away, even though *heaven and earth will pass away*. His word will not pass away: the word of Christ will endure for ever because it is the word of truth and love, the word of justice and grace, the word of reconciliation and peace.

*What the Psalmist foretold* is thus fulfilled: “Mercy and faithfulness have met; Justice and peace have embraced... The Lord will make us prosper and our earth shall yield its fruit. Justice shall march before him and peace shall follow his steps” (*Ps.* 85(84), 10-13).

The Angel Gabriel announced: “Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God’s favour. Listen! You are to conceive and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus” (*Luc.* 1, 30-31): *Jesus*, a name which means “God saves”, *a name which means “Saviour”*.

11. And she whom we venerate here in Swaziland as the Queen of Peace answered with the words: “*I am the handmaid of the Lord... let what you have said be done to me*” (*Ibid.* 1, 38).

*The Queen of Peace is the one who wishes to serve* – who wishes above all to serve the reconciliation and peace which Christ her Son brings to the world. She – the Mother of the King of Peace – desires above all *to serve and to intercede* so that “our earth shall yield its fruit”, the fruit of peace with God and among all people.

Mary – the Queen of Peace – desires above all to serve, because “*to serve God is to reign*”. Amen.

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### *Act of Entrustment to Mary*

*O Mary, Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ*, at the end of this celebration of the Holy Eucharist, in which we have meditated on the mystery of the Annunciation and honoured you under the title “Queen of Peace”, I now turn to you in confident prayer.

Look with love upon God’s people gathered here in worship. See how they rejoice with you in the Good News of your Son. You know how firmly they believe in the Gospel. You know how deep their love is for him. Be near to them always, O Mother of the Redeemer, to assist them on their journey of faith. In union with the Body of Christ throughout the world, *the Church in Swaziland* seeks to respond generously to the great task of evangelization: to hand

on faithfully the teachings of the Church, to defend the dignity and rights of every person, to give constant glory and praise to the Most Holy Trinity.

O dearest Mother of Our Saviour, I entrust to your loving care all the members of the Church in this land, their bishop and priests, their men and women religious, all the laity who serve Christ in the midst of the world. I entrust them to you with great hope, confident that you will teach them how to grow each day in the *knowledge and love of your divine Son*.

O Blessed Virgin Mary, in a special way I entrust to you *the youth* of this country: the little children in their innocence and joy, and the young men and women who are now deciding what to do with their lives. Lead them along the way of truth and love to a future that is bright with hope. May their minds and hearts, like your own, be guided by *the wisdom of the Holy Spirit*.

O Mary, Mother of tenderness, I entrust to you *the sick and the elderly*, and all who care for them. Your own heart was pierced with suffering and sadness as you witnessed *the redemptive suffering of your Son*. Help those who are given a generous share in the Cross of Christ to share as well in the promise of the Resurrection. May *the families of Swaziland* be united in Christ's love and may their homes be like your home in Nazareth, a place of warm welcome and affection.

O Mary, Queen of Peace, I entrust to your gentle care all *the beloved people dwelling in this land*. I place before you their aspirations and desires, especially their concern for justice and peace. When your Son was born at Bethlehem, the angels sang out in chorus: "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and *peace to men who enjoy his favour*" (*Luc. 2, 14*).

Yes, the Son of God, your Son, came to bring peace, peace to men and women of good will, peace to people of every race and nation, peace to those "who enjoy his favour", peace that is founded on justice and mercy. Intercede with your Son, O Queen of Peace, for the gift of peace throughout the world and for the fullness of peace in the hearts of all. And may the Kingdom of the Prince of Peace be ever more firmly established here in Swaziland. Amen.

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I have come to Southern Africa as a pilgrim of peace carrying with me a message of reconciliation. I am saddened to learn that others on their way to join me in this pilgrimage have been the victims of a hijack that caused such anguish and bloodshed. I pray that God may take to himself those who have died and that he may console the members of their families, and grant a steady and speedy recovery to the wounded.