



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO ZIMBABWE, BOTSWANA, LESOTHO, SWAZILAND AND MOZAMBIQUE

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II DURING HIS VISIT TO HIS MAJESTY KING MOSHOESHOE II*

*Maseru (Lesotho)
Friday, 16 September 1988*

*Your Majesty King Moshoeshoe II,
Your Majesty Queen 'Mamohato,
Your Excellency, Chairman of the Military Council
and of the Council of Ministers,
My brother Bishops,
Members of the Military Council
and Ministers of the Government,
Mr Chief Justice,
Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Distinguished Officials of the Government,
Beloved People of Lesotho,*

To all of you I say: "*Khotso! Pula! Nala!*"

1. It gives me great joy to be in Lesotho. Indeed, as the Psalmist says in the Bible, "*This is the day which the Lord has made: let us rejoice and be glad in it!*"^[1]. Thank you, Your Majesty, for your words of welcome. I appreciate your kind invitation to visit your country and I am also grateful to the Catholic Bishops of Lesotho who have likewise invited me to come. My thanks go to all who have generously assisted in the preparation of this visit.

I extend cordial greetings *to all the beloved people of this land*. It is a pleasure to be with you. I come to you *in a spirit of friendship and esteem*, grateful to God for this opportunity of speaking

with you and learning from you, desiring to be for every one of you *a servant of unity and peace*.

2. I also come *as a servant of Jesus Christ, as the chief Pastor of the Catholic Church*. In this service of our Lord, I desire to pray with my brothers and sisters in Christ, to confirm them in their faith and hope and to encourage them in their love for our Redeemer.

It has been a special joy for me to celebrate *the beatification of Father Joseph Gérard*, one of the first Catholic missionaries to the Basotho people and a man of great love for God and for your ancestors, a servant of Christ who sought to be the friend of all. He himself was befriended by the renowned founder of this nation, His Majesty King Moshoeshoe I.

The Catholic Church here has just commemorated the *one hundred twenty-fifth anniversary* of the arrival in Lesotho of Father Gérard and his companions. This event and the many blessings that the Lord has bestowed on the Church here in subsequent years manifest the providence and fidelity of God towards his people. And the memory of God's loving providence in the past gives impetus to today's followers of Jesus Christ in their efforts to be faithful to him. The beatification of Father Gérard is indeed an eloquent sign of the Church's steady growth and vigour.

3. I am pleased at the efforts to promote understanding and communion which are being made by the Church in Lesotho. And I am happy that it has been possible for me to meet with the leaders of other Ecclesial Communities during the course of this visit. For if followers of Jesus Christ are to be servants of reconciliation in the world then they must make every effort *to restore communion in faith and charity* for which he himself prayed.

I know, too, that the citizens of Lesotho share this concern for unity and peace, for it is *part of your national heritage*, ever since the days of King Moshoeshoe I, a leader who chose as his means of governing the way of tolerance and forgiveness, dialogue and persuasion. These principles which continue to inspire you as a nation are indeed worthy of admiration and support. And I can assure you that the Church is always ready to do her part in strengthening this worthy tradition.

4. One of my goals, as chief shepherd of the Church, is *to promote dialogue and understanding* among peoples. It is one of the reasons I undertake visits to countries around the world, and one of hope in coming to Lesotho.

In fact, the Church as a whole desires to further dialogue among all men and women.

The warm welcome you have extended to me expresses your own openness and appreciation of dialogue. In these days of my visit, there have been opportunities to enjoy the fruits of dialogue, listening and speaking with one another. And we have engaged in the most important dialogue of all, the *dialogue that is prayer – our conversation and communion with God*.

5. I assure you of my *deep interest in the culture of Lesotho*. Your cordial welcome is an expression of your hospitality and goodness. And I pray that my visit will serve and encourage the well-being of all the Basotho people. In a special way, I offer my prayerful support to the poor and the sick, and those who have not been able to take part in the events of these days. May they know and experience the abundant mercy of God. And upon all the beloved people of Lesotho I invoke the gifts of peace and joy from the Lord our God.

[1] *Ps. 118, 24*

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