



The Holy See

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

FAREWELL CEREMONY

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II

*«Moshoeshoe I» Airport of Maseru (Lesotho)
Friday, 16 September 1988*

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

1. The time has come for me to bid farewell to Lesotho. It was a shorter visit than had originally been planned, but one that has been filled with much prayer and activity, much joy and friendship. I now wish to express my profound gratitude for your warm reception and cordial hospitality.

I am grateful to Your Majesty, the King of Lesotho, to all the authorities of the nation, and to those who have been responsible for public order during my pastoral visit. I thank every one who contributed time and services to prepare for my coming and to make it such a memorable experience. In a particular way, I am grateful to all the Basotho people who have opened their hearts and mind to me, respectfully receiving me in friendship and helping me to learn firsthand

about your own struggles and successes.

2. With fraternal love in Christ I express my heartfelt thanks to the Bishops of Lesotho and to the whole Catholic Church in this land I shall never forget *the liturgy of Beatification of Blessed Joseph Gérard*, nor the other occasions when we gathered in prayer to praise the Most Holy Trinity and to be renewed by the Holy Spirit in our faith, hope and charity.

The meeting with my brother bishops, the enthusiastic encounter with the young people yesterday afternoon, and the meeting with your clergy, religious and seminarians have shown me how firmly the seed of faith has taken root in this land and how abundant is its fruit. Surely, in heaven today, Blessed Joseph Gérard and all the saints are rejoicing at how *the Gospel* has been embraced by this beloved people and become for many *the rule of daily life*.

With the help of the prayers of Blessed Joseph Gérard and through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, may you find the strength to carry on *the great task of evangelization*. In the words of Saint Paul I can confidently say: "I am quite certain that the One who began this good work in you will see that it is finished when the day of Christ Jesus comes"[1].

3. In his farewell message to his disciples, Jesus Christ said: "*A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends*"[2]. As I leave Lesotho this morning, I wish to recall again the wisdom of these words, *the wisdom of seeking to act out of selfless love*. What is needed in today's world is "*a civilization of love*", a kind of atmosphere in which *the human mind* thinks thoughts of peace and rejects the option of violence, where *the heart* is drawn to beauty and goodness and to the urgent needs of others, where *people join hands as brothers and sisters* to labour in solidarity for the rights and dignity of all, especially for the poorest and most defenceless members of society.

Yes, "a man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends". That is the key to understand the life of Jesus Christ and of his faithful followers of every time and place. It is an accurate description of Blessed Joseph Gérard during the many years that he lived in this land. And even for those who do not believe in the Christian faith, these words about love ring true. For love is *the most powerful force for changing the face of the earth*.

Dear people of Lesotho: thank you for the love you have shown to me. As a parting gesture of my love and respect for you, I will kiss Lesotho soil. I will carry you today and always in my heart. May your homes be blessed with peace and love. And may the God of love keep you for ever in his care. God bless you all.

Khotso! Pula! Nala!

[1] *Phil.* 1, 6.

[2] *Io.* 15, 13.

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