



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF PAUL VI
TO THE BISHOPS OF SCOTLAND
ON THE OCCASION OF THEIR «AD LIMINA» VISIT**

Thursday, 23 November 1972

Dear Brothers in Christ,

We are very happy to welcome you, our brother bishops and fellow labourers in the vineyard of the Lord, to the centre of the Christian Church. As the successor of Peter we greet you and send our greetings to your beloved people in your beautiful country, which we had the pleasure of visiting many years ago.

We bishops have been called by the High Priest himself to be shepherds of our flocks. Never before has the need to be good shepherds been more urgent. The flock need us; they need the light we can bring, they need our presence, they need our love. In the face of confusion and materialism, the shepherd must be the first to bear the light and show the way. The frightened and the wandering must find in us a sure and secure rock upon which they can stand, upon which they can depend. Like the shepherds of ancient Israel, we must make our presence felt, we must continually tell the sheep that we are there, lest they lose their bearings and fall easy prey to the wolf that would devour them. Most of all, we must show our flock that they are loved and not alone. We must know them; they must know us. And we should be ever ready to lay down our very lives on their behalf.

Who would suppose that our mandate can be taken lightly or fulfilled effortlessly? We have been entrusted with the awesome task of safeguarding and transmitting the wisdom of the ages; we have been commanded to show the way, to bring the light, to preach the truth of the Gospel. We have been asked to be nothing less than the presence of Christ himself in his world. Nothing less can be expected of us; nothing more could be demanded of us.

What, then, would the Pope say to you as you visit him? His first word would be one of encouragement. It is not the task of man that we are asked to carry out; it is the task of God. Nor are we expected to carry it out with man's strength alone; we are assured of the strength of God. We have the promise of his grace, and that grace can and will overcome every weakness. The Pope would also assure you of his affection for yourselves and for your people. The climate of the Church is a climate of love, an atmosphere of charity, which reflects the love of Christ for his people. In that love, and for that love, we live and have reason for our being.

As a sign of our affection, and as a pledge of our prayers that God will grant many graces to you, to your people and to your beloved country, we impart our special Apostolic Blessing.