

Botswana as an Island of Peace in a Troubled Sea

*Pope John Paul II**

Your Excellency President Masire, My dear brother Bishop Setlalekgosi, Noble People of Botswana, Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ.

It is a great joy for me to begin this visit to your country. I wish to greet you in a true spirit of friendship and respect, and to assure you of my fervent prayers for the *well-being and prosperity* of the people of Botswana. I am grateful to President Masire and the Government for their kind invitation. I also wish to thank Bishop Setlalekgosi and all the Catholic faithful who have made this visit possible.

Botswana is a country at peace with itself and with its neighbours. In fact, it can rightly be called an island of peace in a troubled sea. This is due in great measure to the nature of the Botswana people: you are a *peace loving and friendly people*, a people who believe in the basic equality and human dignity of every man and woman. Here in your land *freedom of speech and freedom of religion* are part of your national life. May you always enjoy the *internal harmony* that is so essential if true progress is to be made for the benefit of each and every citizen. With God's help, may your country also continue to be an *agent of peace* for your neighbours.

I understand that Botswana's independence is founded on four basic principles: *unity, democracy, self-reliance and development*. By building on these four pillars, you have achieved, in recent years, a remarkable degree of economic and social progress. These achievements are a *ray of hope* for people throughout Africa who long for authentic human development for themselves and for their children.

The pursuit of these four national ideals has enabled Botswana to make great strides in improving the quality of life of its people. Since independence in 1966, there has been significant and steady progress in the areas of education, health care and public works. This is a great credit to all of you: to the efforts of your government and to the commitment and collaboration of the people of Botswana in promoting the common good of the nation.

While the primary mission of the Catholic Church is religious and spiritual, nonetheless her members share this concern for economic and social development. The Church believes that the proper goal of *authentic development* is not only the material and economic transformation of the world for the better, but also the *creation of ever greater possibilities* for men and women to fulfil themselves in accordance with their dignity as children of God. Since society exists for people, it has the duty to *respect, protect and promote the human person* in all aspects. Among these aspects we must include the *religious dimension*, which expresses our transcendent vocation as human beings, and embraces our whole earthly existence. As I said in my Message for this Year's World Day of Peace, religion helps us to appreciate better our human dignity and so it contributes to human *freedom*; it strengthens moral integrity and helps us to act with greater *responsibility*; it prepares us for true *fellowship* with *other human beings by teaching* us to live in solidarity with everyone as brothers and sisters (Cfr. *'Nuntius ob diem ad pacem fovendam dicatum pro a. D. 1988'*, 3, die 8 dec. 1987: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, X, 3 [1987] 1336 s).

May the people of Botswana always preserve their traditional respect for the religious dimension of human life. May they continue to build a just and peaceful society on the solid foundation of respect for the human person, created by God in his own image and likeness.

I offer a special greeting to all my *Catholic brothers and sisters*, whom I have so looked forward to meeting in the course of this pastoral visit to Botswana. I come to you as a *pastor* in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and as a *brother* who wishes to share your joy at all that God has accomplished among

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you through the power of the Holy Spirit. I join you in thanking God for the gift of faith and baptism by which you share in the new life of the Risen Saviour. I wish to *confirm you in your Catholic faith*, and to *the earthly well-being* of your future of the Church in this beautiful country. As members of the Body of Christ, you are called to be heralds of the Good News of salvation. By living *lives modelled on the Gospel*, you not only contribute to the earthly well-being of your fellow citizens but also bring them an abundance of *spiritual blessings*: you lead them to Christ. With Saint Paul I pray that 'the Lord may be generous in increasing your love, and make you love one another and the whole human race as much as we love you. And may he so *confirm your hearts in holiness* that you may be blameless in God's sight' (Cfr. *1Thess.* 3, 12-13).

I also extend my hand in friendship and peace to *other Christians and to the members of other religions*. Through a common *respect for conscience*, we can do much to safeguard the dignity of the human person in today's world. Through active cooperation, we can promote the spiritual and material good of the human family. Through *mutual love* and greater understanding, we can help bring about the *world peace* so earnestly desired by all people of good will.

Every nation, no matter how young or old, has its own *unique contribution* to make to the rich tapestry of human life and culture. So too, every local Church builds up the one Body of Christ. I am confident that when I have completed my brief visit to Botswana I shall have gained a still deeper appreciation of the *unity and variety of the human family*, and also of the ways in which by his providence God leads and guides his sons and daughters. May he bless the people of Botswana! May he bless you now and always with an abundance of joy and peace!

Pula!

Acknowledgement

Welcome Ceremony, Address of Pope John Paul II, at Sir Seretse Khama International Airport, Gaborone, Botswana, 13 September 1988. *Source*: https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1988/september/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19880913_arrivo-botswana.html accessed 29 May 2018