

JOURNEY TO UGANDA

**ADDRESS OF PAUL VI
TO MISTER MILTON OBOTE,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA***

Kampala, 31 July 1969

Mister President,

We express Our respectful greetings to Your Excellency, the Head of State of the Republic of Uganda. This Nation is particularly dear to the Catholic Church, since it has provided the first canonized African Martyrs, and the first African Bishop, of modern times; and because a third of its population comprises faithful sons and daughters of the Church, making this one of the first Christian Nations of Central Africa.

Your people were already well disposed to receive the Gospel when it was first preached to them in eighteen hundred and seventy-nine, because of their deep religious feeling, their rich worship, prayer and wisdom. The words of Our Message to Africa are especially applicable here: "The Catholic Church has great respect for the moral and religious values of African tradition. Not only do they have deep significance in themselves, but they also seem to provide a valuable foundation for the preaching of the Gospel, and for the erection of a new society in Christ" (*Africae Terrarum*, No. 14).

We confidently assure Your Excellency of the staunch loyalty of Catholic citizens to Uganda. They wish to be the most faithful, the most industrious, the most helpful and peaceful members of the national community, in accordance with their Faith, and their duties towards the good of their Fatherland.

"The Church in no way desires to inject herself into the government of the earthly city. She claims no other authority than that of ministering to men, with the help of God, in a spirit of charity and faithful service" (*Ad Gentes*, No. 12). By spreading the light of Revelation, the message of Love, she promotes the dignity of man, training hearts and minds in the virtues of a just and brotherly social life, for the cultural, moral, and social progress of the people, in peace, and a common awareness of the good of all.

A trait which does great honour to the people of Uganda is their hospitality, with the harmony they construct out of great diversity. We are happy to pay high tribute to Your Excellency as Head of State, and to the Government of Uganda, for the protection and assistance given to refugees. We praise this concrete testimony of your respect for human life, and for the dignity of every man. We trust that this admirable example may inspire other countries, far and near, especially those now in conflict. The sense of brotherhood should prevail over every motive of division. The open heart and hand of Uganda give your Nation a special qualification to work in favour of peace in all Africa.

With this renewed assurance of Our benevolent interest and warm friendship, We gladly invoke upon Your Excellency, upon the Government, and upon the beloved people of the Republic of Uganda, God's choicest favours and richest graces of prosperity, happiness and peace.

*AAS 61 (1969), p.578-579.

Insegnamenti di Paolo VI, vol. VII, p.537-538.

L'Osservatore Romano 2.8.1969, p.2.

ORa n.32 p.11.