



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO KENYA, UGANDA AND THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC
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HOLY MASS

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

Nairobi University Campus (Kenya)
Thursday, 26 November 2015

[Multimedia]

God's word speaks to us in the depths of our heart. Today God tells us that we belong to him. He made us, we are his family, and he will always be there for us. "Fear not", he says to us, "I have chosen you and I promise to give you my blessing" (cf. *Is* 44:2).

We hear this promise in today's first reading. The Lord tells us that in the desert he will pour forth water on the thirsty land; he will cause the children of his people to flourish like grass and luxuriant willows. We know that this prophecy was fulfilled in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. But we also see it fulfilled wherever the Gospel is preached and new peoples become members of God's family, the Church. Today we rejoice that it was fulfilled in this land. Through the preaching of the Gospel, you too became part of the great Christian family.

Isaiah's prophecy invites us to look to our own families, and to realize how important they are in God's plan. Kenyan society has long been blessed with strong family life, a deep respect for the wisdom of the elderly and love for children. The health of any society depends on the health of its families. For their sake, and for the good of society, our faith in God's word calls us to support families in their mission in society, to accept children as a blessing for our world, and to defend the dignity of each man and woman, for all of us are brothers and sisters in the one human family.

In obedience to God's word, we are also called to resist practices which foster arrogance in men, hurt or demean women, and threaten the life of the innocent unborn. We are called to respect and

encourage one another, and to reach out to all those in need. Christian families have this special mission: to radiate God's love, and to spread the life-giving waters of his Spirit. This is especially important today, for we are seeing the growth of new deserts created by a culture of materialism and indifference to others.

Here, in the heart of this University, where the minds and hearts of new generations are being shaped, I appeal in a special way to the young people of the nation. Let the great values of Africa's traditions, the wisdom and truth of God's word, and the generous idealism of your youth guide you in working to shape a society which is ever more just, inclusive and respectful of human dignity. May you always be concerned for the needs of the poor, and reject everything that leads to prejudice and discrimination, for these things, we know, are not of God.

All of us are familiar with Jesus' parable about the man who built his house on sand, rather than rock. When the winds came, it fell with a mighty crash (cf. *Mt 7:24-27*). God is the rock on which we are called to build. He tells us this in the first reading, and he asks us: "Is there a God besides me?" (cf. *Is 44:8*).

When the Risen Jesus says, in today's Gospel, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (*Mt 28:18*), he is telling us that he, the Son of God, is himself the rock. There is none besides him. As the one Saviour of mankind, he wishes to draw men and women of every time and place to himself, so that he can bring them to the Father. He wants all of us to build our lives on the firm foundation of his word.

And that is the charge which the Lord gives to each of us. He asks us to be missionary disciples, men and women who radiate the truth, beauty and life-changing power of the Gospel. Men and women who are channels of God's grace, who enable his mercy, kindness and truth to become the building blocks of a house that stands firm. A house which is a home, where brothers and sisters at last live in harmony and mutual respect, in obedience to the will of the true God, who has shown us, in Jesus, the way to that freedom and peace for which all hearts long.

May Jesus, the Good Shepherd, the rock on whom we build our lives, guide you and your families in the way of goodness and mercy all the days of your lives. May he bless all Kenyans with his peace.

"Stand strong in faith! Do not be afraid!" For you belong to the Lord.

Mungu awabariki! (God bless you!)

Mungu abariki Kenya! (God bless Kenya!)

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