

***Address of His Holiness Pope Francis
Meeting with Authorities, the Diplomatic Corps
and Representatives of Civil Society
Maputo, Salão das Índias do Palácio “Ponte Vermelha”
Thursday, 5 September 2019***

Mr President,
Members of the Government, Parliament and Diplomatic Corps,
Distinguished Authorities,
Representatives of Civil Society,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank you, Mr President, for your words of welcome and for your kind invitation to visit this nation. I am happy once more to be in Africa and to inaugurate this Apostolic Journey in your country, so blessed by its natural beauty and by a great cultural richness born of the evident joy in life of your people and their hope in a better future.

I cordially greet the Members of the Government, Parliament and the Diplomatic Corps, and the Representatives of civil society here present. Through you, I wish to approach and affectionately greet the entire Mozambican people, from Rovuma to Maputo, who have opened their doors to us in order to foster a renewed future of peace and reconciliation.

I would like my first words of closeness and solidarity to be addressed to all those struck by cyclones Idai and Kenneth, whose devastating effects continue to be felt by so many families, especially in those places where it is not yet possible to rebuild, because they require this special attention. Sadly, I will not be able to go personally to visit you, but I want you to know of my own participation in your anguish and suffering, and the commitment of the Catholic community to respond to this most difficult situation. Amid the catastrophe and desolation, I pray that, in God’s providence, constant concern will be shown by all those civil and social groups who make people their priority and are in a position to promote the necessary rebuilding.

I want also to express my personal gratitude, and that of the larger international community, for the efforts made in recent decades to ensure that peace is once more the norm, and reconciliation the best path to confront the difficulties and challenges that you face as a nation. In this spirit and with this intent, a month ago you signed in Serra da Gorongosa the Agreement for a definitive cessation of military hostilities between brother Mozambicans. A landmark that we greet with the hope that it will prove decisive and a further courageous step on the path of peace that began with the General Peace Agreement of 1992 in Rome.

How much has happened since the signing of the historic treaty that sealed the peace and has gradually begun to bear fruit! Those first fruits sustain hope and the determination to make your future not one of conflict, but of the acknowledgement that you are all brothers and sisters, sons and daughters of a single land, stewards with a shared destiny. Courage brings peace! Genuine courage: not the courage of brute force and violence, but one expressed concretely in the tireless pursuit of the common good (cf. PAUL VI, Message for the 1973 World Day of Peace).

You have experienced suffering, sorrow and affliction, but you have refused to let human relationships be governed by vengeance or repression, or to allow hatred and violence to have the final word. As my Predecessor Saint John Paul II recalled during his visit to your country in 1988: “Many men, women and children suffer from lack of housing, adequate food, schools for instruction, hospitals for health care, churches in which to meet and to pray, and fields to provide workers with labour. Thousands of persons are forced to relocate in order to find security and the means of survival; others have taken refuge in nearby countries... No to violence, and yes to peace!” (Visit to the President of the Republic, 16 September 1988, 3).

In the course of these years, you have come to realize how the pursuit of lasting peace – a mission incumbent upon all – calls for strenuous, constant and unremitting effort, for peace is “like a delicate flower, struggling to blossom on the stony ground of violence” (Message for the 2019 World Day of Peace). As a result, it demands that we continue, with determination but without fanaticism, with courage but without exaltation, with tenacity but in an intelligent way, to promote peace and reconciliation, not the violence that brings only destruction.

As we know, peace is not merely absence of war but a tireless commitment – especially on the part of those of us charged with greater responsibility – to recognize, protect and concretely restore the dignity, so often overlooked or ignored, of our brothers and sisters, so that they can see themselves as the principal protagonists of the destiny of their nation. Nor can we neglect the fact that “without equal opportunities, the different forms of aggression and conflict will find a fertile terrain for growth and eventually explode. When a society – whether local, national or global – is willing to leave part of itself on the fringes, no political programs or resources spent on law enforcement or surveillance systems can indefinitely guarantee tranquility” (Evangelii Gaudium, 59).

Peace has made possible the development of Mozambique in a number of areas. Promising advances have been made in the fields of education and health care. I encourage you to continue your efforts to build up the structures and institutions needed to ensure that no one feels abandoned, especially the young who make up so great a part of your country’s population. They are not only the hope of this land; they are also its present, a present that challenges, seeks out and needs to find worthy channels that can allow them to make good use of all of their talents. They have the potential to sow the seeds for the growth of that social harmony desired by all.

A culture of peace requires “an ongoing process in which every new generation must take part” (ibid., 220). For this reason the path to be taken must be one that favours and is fully imbued with a culture of encounter: acknowledging others, creating bonds and building bridges. In this regard, it is essential to cherish memory as a path opening up towards the future, as a journey leading to the attainment of common goals, shared values and ideas that can help to overcome narrow corporative or partisan interests. In this way, the true wealth of your nation can be found in the service of others, especially the poor. You have a courageous historical mission to undertake. May you not desist as long as there are children and young people without schooling, families that are homeless, unemployed workers, farmers without land to cultivate. These are the foundations for a future of hope, because it will be a future of dignity! These are the weapons of peace.

Peace invites us also to look to the earth, our common home. From this standpoint, Mozambique is a nation greatly blessed, and you have a special responsibility to care for this blessing. The protection of the land is also the protection of life, which demands particular attention whenever we see a tendency towards pillaging and exfoliation driven by a greed generally not cultivated even by the inhabitants of these lands, nor motivated by the common good of your people. A culture of peace implies a productive, sustainable and inclusive development, where all Mozambicans can feel that this land is theirs, where they can establish relations of fraternity and equity with their neighbours and all their surroundings.

Mr President, distinguished Authorities! All of you are meant to help create a magnificent work of art: the dawn of peace and reconciliation which can safeguard the right of your sons and daughters to the future. It is my prayer that, in this time that I will spend with you, I too, in communion with my brother bishops and the Catholic Church in this land, can help make peace, reconciliation and hope reign definitively in your midst.