

Pope

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and non-violence the only way to change it.

The pope repeatedly praised Zambia and neighboring Malawi for "heroic" efforts at hosting hundreds of thousands of refugees, most of them fleeing strife in Mozambique. He urged international agencies to see the situation "not in political terms alone but as a deeply human drama" and to provide assistance.

The pope also appealed for implementation of a recent agreement paving the way for Namibia's independence and urged that foreign forces be withdrawn soon from Angola. Angola, supported by Cuban soldiers, has been fighting with South African and guerrilla forces for years.

In a Mass celebrated against a backdrop of copper-mine smokestacks and slag heaps in Kitwe, Zambia, the pope sought to bring a message of hope to Zambia's economic disaster area, the copper belt.

"The Lord has never abandoned his people," he said in a sermon.

"He is with you as you go to the mines, he is there at the pit face; he is with you as you gather as members of a family or as a social group," he said.

As at many of the pope's events, the reception at Kitwe was enlivened by near-continual song and dance, characteristic of African liturgies. But also typical was the sparse crowd — about 50,000 people, less than half the number expected. Organizers noted that the visit coincided with a fuel shortage in Zambia, where buses are few and where most people had to walk miles to see the pope.

Celebrating Mass in Lusaka May 4, the pope again tried to put familiar economic and social problems into a perspective of Christian values. He reminded a crowd of 200,000 people that "in God's eyes it is the poor who are blessed" and that the poor should "never lose confidence in their dignity and vocation as God's children."

In Malawi, the pope was welcomed and at times upstaged by the country's president-for-life, Hastings Kamuzu Banda. Banda stole the show at an airport ceremony May 4, where he was accompanied by women who danced in his honor and signs that hailed him as "the conqueror." In a talk, Banda said his 25-year, one-party rule in Malawi had brought worldwide praise.

The pope, apparently delighted with Banda's combination of charisma and national pride, at one point got to his feet

and gave the president a big hug.

In a Mass May 5 in Blantyre, the pope said he was aware that Malawi's acceptance of some 750,000 refugees had placed a "great burden" on the country's already strained resources. Several thousand Mozambican refugees sat near the altar.

In welcoming the refugees, he said, Malawians had truly "welcomed Christ," and he urged that the same approach be taken to victims of AIDS, which is a growing problem in Malawi.

Speaking to Malawi's six bishops the same day, the pope advised "mutual respect" between Catholics and Moslems.

"There is no place for aggressive proselytism which disturbs and hurts, still less for the use of unworthy methods," he said.

The pope's words appeared to reflect concern about Moslem evangelizing in some parts of Malawi, where Arab petro-dollars have financed a recent mosque-building boom.

At a meeting with about 30,000 young people in Blantyre's stadium May 5, the pope alluded to Malawi's serious economic problems, which have made it the world's sixth poorest nation.

"Even if you are unemployed and have little prospect of getting work, you are still chosen in love to be a saint," he told the youths, who put on a lengthy song and dance performance for the pontiff. In the end, the pope invited one group of dancers, wearing gourd rattles and grass skirts, to come up to his platform and take a bow.

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June 4, 1955

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