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POPE BENEDICT XVI ' S VISIT TO AFRICA

INTERVIEW OF THE HOLY FATHER BENEDICT XVI DURING THE FLIGHT TO AFRICA

Q. – Your Holiness, we are grateful for your presence with us today; there are about seventy of us preparing to make this journey with you. We offer you our best wishes and we hope to be of service to you, by enabling many others to take part in this visit. As usual, we want to express our thanks to you for this conversation that you have granted us; we have prepared for it by collecting, in the course of recent days, a certain number of questions from our colleagues – about thirty have been received – and then we chose the ones that seem likely to put together a fairly complete picture of this journey and to be of interest to all. We are most obliged to you for the responses that you will offer us. The first question comes from our colleague Brunelli, from Italian television, who is here on our right:

> **Q.** – *Good morning. Your Holiness, for some time, and in particular in the wake of your recent letter to the Bishops of the world, many newspapers have been talking about the "isolation of the Pope". What do you have to say about that? Do you really feel isolated? And what are your feelings, in the light of recent events, as you make your way towards Africa with us?*

A. – To tell the truth, I must say I find this myth of my isolation rather amusing. I do not feel alone at all. Every day I receive scheduled visits from my closest co-workers, from the Secretary of State to the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, etc. Then I regularly see all the Heads of Dicastery, and every day I receive Bishops on

their Ad Limina visits. Recently I met all the Bishops of Nigeria, one after another, and then it was the Bishops of Argentina ... We have had two *Plenarie* in recent days, one with the Congregation for Divine Worship and one with the Congregation for the Clergy. Then I talk to my friends, another whole network – recently my year group from my seminary days came from Germany for the day so that we could talk together ...

So isolation is not a problem, I am truly surrounded by friends in a splendid collaboration with Bishops, co-workers, and lay people, and I am grateful for this. I am going to Africa with great joy: I love Africa, I have made many African friends from the time when I was a professor right up to the present; I love the joy of the faith, this joyful faith that is found in Africa. You know that the Lord's command for the successor of Peter is "to strengthen his brothers in the faith": I try to do so. But I am sure that I myself shall return strengthened by them, having so to speak "caught" something of their joyful faith.

Q. – The second question is from John Thavis, Rome Bureau Chief of Catholic News Service, the news agency of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

> **Q.** – *Your Holiness, you are travelling to Africa during a global economic crisis that has also had repercussions on poor countries. Moreover, Africa at the present time has to respond to the challenge of a food crisis. I want to ask three things: is this situation going to be touched on during your visit? Will you be asking the international community to tackle Africa's problems? And thirdly, will you be speaking of these problems in the Encyclical that you are preparing?*

A. – Thank you for the question. Naturally, I am not going to Africa with a political or economic agenda, which would lie outside my

competence. I am going with a programme that is religious, to do with faith and morals, but this too has an essential contribution to make to the problem of the current economic crisis. We all know that a fundamental element of the crisis is the ethical deficit in economic structures. It has been understood that ethics is not something "outside" the economy, but "inside", and that the economy does not function if it does not include the ethical element.

Therefore, speaking of God and speaking of the great spiritual values that constitute the Christian life, I will try to make my own contribution, which should also help to overcome the present crisis, and to renew the economic system from within, which is where the real crisis lies. And of course I shall be appealing for international solidarity. The Church is Catholic, that is to say, universal, open to all cultures and all continents. She is present within all political systems and thus, for Catholicism, solidarity is an internal and fundamental principle. I should like to make an appeal first and foremost for Catholic solidarity, while also extending this to include the solidarity of all those who recognize their responsibility within today's human society.

Obviously I shall be speaking of this in the Encyclical too: this is a reason for the delay. We were almost ready to publish it, when this crisis broke out, and we looked at the text again so as to respond more fully, within our particular competence, and within the social teaching of the Church, but with reference to the specific details of the current crisis. In this way I hope that the Encyclical can also be an element that helps to overcome the difficult situation of the present time.

Q. – Your Holiness, the third question comes from our colleague Isabelle de Gaulmyn from "La Croix".

Q. – *Holy Father, good morning. I will ask the question in Italian,*

but perhaps you could kindly answer in French ... The Special Council for Africa of the Synod of Bishops has asked that the quantitative growth of the Church in Africa should also become a qualitative growth. At times, the leaders of the Church are thought of as a wealthy and privileged group, and their conduct is not consistent with the proclamation of the Gospel. Will you invite the Church in Africa to make a commitment to an examination of conscience and a purification of its structures?

A. – I shall try, if I can, to speak in French. I have a more positive view of the Church in Africa: it is a Church that is very close to the poor, a Church with suffering members, with people who need assistance, and thus it seems to me that the Church is truly an institution that still functions even when other structures no longer function, through her system of education, health care, assistance, in all these situations, she is present in the world of the poor and the suffering.

Naturally, original sin is also present in the Church; there is not a perfect society, and therefore there are also sinners and shortcomings in the Church in Africa, and in this sense, an examination of conscience, an interior purification is always necessary. I would think of the eucharistic liturgy in this context – we always begin with a purification of conscience and a new beginning in the Lord's presence. I would also say that, more than a purification of structures – which is always necessary as well – a purification of hearts is needed, because structures are the reflection of hearts. We do what we can to give new impetus to spirituality, to the presence of God in our hearts, both to purify the structures of the Church, and also to assist the purification of the structures of society.

Q. – Now a question from the German journalists here with us: Christa Kramer, representing Sankt Ulrich Verlag, would like to ask this:

Q. – *Holy Father, safe journey! Father Lombardi asked me to speak in Italian, so I shall put the question in Italian. When you speak to Europe, you often speak of a context from which God seems to be disappearing. In Africa it isn't like that, but there is an aggressive presence of sects, there are the traditional African religions. What, then, is the specific content of the message of the Catholic Church that you would like to present in this context?*

A. – Very well, first we all recognize that in Africa the problem of atheism scarcely arises, since the reality of God is so present, so real in the hearts of the Africans that not to believe in God, to live without God simply isn't a temptation. It is true that there are also problems with sects: we do not proclaim, as some of them do, a Gospel of prosperity, but a Christian realism.

We do not proclaim miracles, as some do, but the sobriety of the Christian life. We are convinced that all of this sobriety, this realism which proclaims a God who became man, therefore a profoundly human God, a God who suffers, also, with us, gives meaning to our own suffering through a proclamation with a broader horizon, which has more future. And we know that these sects are not very stable: at any given time, it may be all very well to proclaim prosperity, miraculous healings, etc., but after a while, it becomes clear that life is difficult, that a human God, a God who suffers with us is more convincing, more real, and offers greater help for life. It is also important that we have the structure of the Catholic Church.

We do not proclaim a small group that after a certain time becomes isolated and lost, but we enter into this great universal network of catholicity, which is not only trans-temporal, but above all, it is present as a great network of friendship that unites us and also helps us to overcome individualism so as to arrive at this unity in diversity, which is the true promise.

Q. – Now a further question from a French speaker: our colleague Philippe Visseyrias from France 2:

> **Q.** – *Your Holiness, among the many ills that beset Africa, one of the most pressing is the spread of Aids. The position of the Catholic Church on the way to fight it is often considered unrealistic and ineffective. Will you address this theme during the journey? Holy Father, would you be able to respond in French to this question?*

A. – I would say the opposite. I think that the most efficient, most truly present player in the fight against Aids is the Catholic Church herself, with her movements and her various organizations. I think of the Sant'Egidio community that does so much, visibly and also behind the scenes, in the struggle against Aids, I think of the Camillians, and so much more besides, I think of all the Sisters who take care of the sick. I would say that this problem of Aids cannot be overcome merely with money, necessary though it is. If there is no human dimension, if Africans do not help [*by responsible behaviour*], the problem cannot be overcome by the distribution of prophylactics: on the contrary, they increase it.

The solution must have two elements: firstly, bringing out the human dimension of sexuality, that is to say a spiritual and human renewal that would bring with it a new way of behaving towards others, and secondly, true friendship offered above all to those who are suffering, a willingness to make sacrifices and to practise self-denial, to be alongside the suffering. And so these are the factors that help and that lead to real progress: our twofold effort to renew humanity inwardly, to give spiritual and human strength for proper conduct towards our bodies and those of others, and this capacity to suffer with those who are suffering, to remain present in situations of trial. It seems to me that this is the proper response, and the Church does this, thereby offering an enormous and important contribution. We thank all who do so.

Q. – And now, one last question which comes from Chile, because we are very international here: we also have the correspondent from Chilean Catholic Television with us. And we give her the opportunity for the last question: Maria Burgos …

> **Q.** – *Thank you, Father Lombardi. Your Holiness, what signs of hope does the Church see on the African Continent? And do you intend to give Africa a message of hope?*

A. – Our faith is hope by definition. Sacred Scripture says so. And therefore, anyone with faith is also convinced of bringing hope. It seems to me, despite all the problems that we know well, that there are great signs of hope. New governments, new openness to cooperation, the fight against corruption – a great evil that must be overcome! – and also the openness of the traditional religions to the Christian faith, because in the traditional religions everyone recognizes God, the one God, but he seems somewhat distant. They are waiting for him to come closer. It is in the proclamation of God made man that they recognize that God truly has come closer. Then, the Catholic Church has so much in common: let's say, the cult of ancestors finds its response in the communion of saints, in purgatory.

The saints are not only the canonized, they are also our loved ones who have died. And thus, in the Body of Christ is accomplished exactly what the cult of ancestors somehow intuited. And so on. Thus there is a profound connection here that truly gives hope. And interreligious dialogue is also growing – I have now spoken with more than half of the African Bishops, and they have told me that relations with the Muslims, despite the problems that can be identified, are highly promising. Dialogue is growing in mutual respect and cooperation in common ethical responsibilities. Moreover, there is a growing sense of catholicity which helps to overcome tribalism, one of the great problems, and from this comes the joy of being Christian.

One problem with the traditional religions is the fear of spirits.

One of the African Bishops said to me: people are truly converted to Christianity, they become fully Christian once they know that Christ really is stronger. There is no more fear. And this too is a growing phenomenon. Thus, I would say, with so many elements and problems that are not lacking, there is a growth in spiritual, economic and human resources which give hope, and I should like to highlight these elements of hope.

Q. – Many thanks, Your Holiness, for the time that you have given us and for what you have said. It is an excellent introduction for following your journey with great enthusiasm. We will make every effort to spread your message over the whole continent and to all our readers and listeners.

Tuesday, 17 March 2009

MEETING WITH THE BISHOPS OF CAMEROON

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER BENEDICT XVI

Dear Cardinal,
Dear Brother Bishops,

This meeting with the Pastors of the Catholic Church in Cameroon gives me great joy. I thank the President of your Episcopal Conference, Archbishop Simon-Victor Tonyé Bakot, Archbishop of Yaoundé, for the kind words he has addressed to me in your name. It is the third time that your country has welcomed the Successor of Peter. As you know, my reason for coming is in the first instance to meet the peoples of the beloved African continent and also to present to the Presidents of the Episcopal Conferences the *Instrumentum Laboris* of the Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops. This morning, through you, I would like to offer affectionate greetings to all the faithful entrusted to your pastoral care. May the grace and peace of the Lord Jesus be with each one of you, with all the families of your great and beautiful country, with the priests, the men and women religious, the catechists, and all who are engaged with you in proclaiming the Gospel!

In this year dedicated to Saint Paul, it is most opportune to recall the urgent need to proclaim the Gospel to everyone. This mandate, which the Church received from Christ, remains a priority, for there are countless people still waiting to hear the message of hope and love that will enable them to "obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God" (*Rom* 8:21). Together with you, dear Brothers, it is your entire diocesan communities that are sent out to be witnesses of the Gospel. The Second Vatican Council emphasized that "missionary activity flows immediately from the very nature of the Church" (*Ad Gentes*, 6). In order to guide and inspire the People of God in this task, the Pastors themselves, first and foremost, must be preachers of the faith, leading new disciples to Christ. The proclamation of the Gospel

is the particular task of the Bishop, who can say, with Saint Paul: "If I preach the Gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!" (*1 Cor* 9:16). To strengthen and purify their faith, the faithful need to hear the words of their Bishop, the catechist *par excellence*.

In order to undertake this mission of evangelization and respond to the many challenges of today's world, besides holding formal meetings, which are necessary in themselves, the Pastors of the Church must be united by a profound communion with one another. The quality of the work accomplished by your Episcopal Conference, reflecting well the life of the Church and of Cameroonian society, enables you to search collectively for answers to the many challenges which the Church has to face and, through your pastoral letters, to give common guidelines to assist the faithful in their ecclesial and social life.

A lively awareness of the collegial dimension of your ministry should impel you to bring about among yourselves a variety of expressions of sacramental fraternity, ranging from mutual acceptance and esteem to the various manifestations of charity and practical cooperation (cf. *Pastores Gregis*, 59). Effective collaboration between dioceses, particularly with regard to better distribution of priests in your country, cannot fail to promote relations of fraternal solidarity with the poorer dioceses, so that the proclamation of the Gospel should not suffer through lack of ministers.

This apostolic solidarity should also extend generously to meet the needs of other local Bishops, especially those of your continent. Thus it will appear clearly that your Christian communities, following the example of those that brought the Gospel message to you, are likewise a missionary Church.

Dear Brothers, the Bishop and his priests are called to maintain relations of close communion, founded on the one priesthood of Christ

in which they share, albeit in different degrees. The quality of the bond uniting you with the priests, your principal and irreplaceable co-workers, is of the greatest importance. If they see in their Bishop a father and a brother who loves them, listens to them and offers them comfort in their trials, who devotes particular attention to their human and material needs, they are encouraged to carry out their ministry whole-heartedly, worthily and fruitfully. The words and example of their Bishop have a key role in inspiring them to give their spiritual and sacramental life a central place in their ministry, spurring them on to discover and to live ever more deeply the particular role of the shepherd as, first and foremost, a man of prayer.

The spiritual and sacramental life is an extraordinary treasure, given to us for ourselves and for the good of the people entrusted to us. I urge you, then, to be especially vigilant regarding the faithfulness of priests and consecrated persons to the commitments made at their ordination or entry into religious life, so that they persevere in their vocation, for the greater holiness of the Church and the glory of God. The authenticity of their witness requires that there be no dichotomy between what they teach and the way they live each day.

In your dioceses, many young men are presenting themselves as candidates for the priesthood. We can only thank the Lord for this. It is essential that serious discernment should take place. With this in mind, I encourage you, despite the organizational difficulties that can sometimes occur at the pastoral level, to give priority to the choice and training of formators and spiritual directors. They must have a personal and profound knowledge of the candidates for the priesthood, and must be capable of offering them a solid human, spiritual and pastoral formation so as to make them mature and balanced men, well prepared for priestly life. Your constant fraternal support will help the formators to accomplish their task in the love of the Church and her mission.

From the earliest days of the Christian faith in Cameroon, men and women religious have made an essential contribution to the life of the Church. I join you in giving thanks to God for this, and I rejoice at the development of consecrated life among the sons and daughters of your country, giving rise also to the expression of distinctively African charisms in communities that originated in your country. In fact, the profession of the evangelical counsels acts as "a sign that can and should effectively inspire all the members of the Church to fulfil indefatigably the duties of their Christian vocation" (*Lumen Gentium*, 44).

In your ministry of proclaiming the Gospel, you are also assisted by other pastoral workers, particularly catechists. In the evangelization of your country, they have played and they continue to play a key role. I thank them for their generosity and their faithfulness in the service of the Church. Through their work, an authentic inculturation of the faith is taking place. Their human, spiritual and doctrinal formation is therefore indispensable. The material, moral and spiritual support that they receive from their pastors, so that they can accomplish their mission in good living and working conditions, also serves to express to them the Church's recognition of the importance of their commitment to proclaim the faith and foster its growth.

Among the many challenges facing you in your responsibility as Pastors, the situation of the family is of particular concern. The difficulties arising from the impact of modernity and secularization on traditional society inspire you to defend vigorously the essential values of the African family, and to give high priority to its thorough evangelization. In developing the pastoral care of the family, you are eager to promote a better understanding of the nature, dignity and role of marriage, which presupposes an indissoluble and stable union.

The liturgy occupies an important place in the expression of your communities' faith. In general, these ecclesial celebrations are

festive and joyful, manifesting the fervour of the faithful who are happy to be together, in Church, giving praise to the Lord. It is therefore essential that the joy expressed in this way does not obstruct, but rather facilitates dialogue and communion with God, attained through a genuine internalization of the structures and words of the liturgy, so that these express what is taking place in the hearts of believers, in true union with all the other participants. The dignity of the celebrations, especially when they take place in the presence of large crowds, is an eloquent sign of this.

The spread of sects and esoteric movements, and the growing influence of superstitious forms of religion, as well as relativism, constitute an urgent invitation to give new impetus to the formation of children and young adults, especially in university settings and intellectual circles. In this regard, I would like to encourage and pay tribute to the work of the *Institut Catholique* of Yaoundé and all the Church institutions which have as their mission to make the word of God and the teaching of the Church accessible and comprehensible to all.

I am glad to know that the lay faithful in your country are becoming increasingly active in the life of the Church and of society. The numerous lay associations flourishing in your dioceses are a sign of the Spirit's work at the heart of the people of God, and they contribute to a renewed proclamation of the Gospel. I am pleased to highlight and to encourage the active involvement of women's associations in several areas of the Church's mission, which shows a genuine recognition of the dignity of women and their particular vocation in the ecclesial community and in society. I give thanks to God for the eagerness of the lay people in your country to contribute to the future of the Church and to the proclamation of the Gospel. Through the sacraments of Christian initiation and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, they are empowered to proclaim the Gospel and to serve others, both individuals and society at large. I therefore strongly encourage you

to continue to offer them a solid Christian formation so that they can "fully exercise their role of inspiring the temporal order – political, cultural, economic and social – with Christian principles, which is the specific task of the laity's vocation" (*Ecclesia in Africa*, 75).

In the context of globalization with which we are all familiar, the Church takes a particular interest in those who are most deprived. The Bishop's mission leads him to be the defender of the rights of the poor, to call forth and encourage the exercise of charity, which is a manifestation of the Lord's love for the "little ones". In this way, the faithful are led to grasp the fact that the Church is truly God's family, gathered in brotherly love; this leaves no room for ethnocentrism or factionalism, and it contributes towards reconciliation and cooperation among ethnic groups for the good of all. Moreover, through her social doctrine, the Church seeks to awaken hope in the hearts of those left by the wayside. So it is the duty of Christians, particularly lay people with social, economic and political responsibilities, to be guided by the Church's social teaching, in order to contribute to the building up of a more just world where everyone can live with dignity.

Dear Cardinal, dear Brother Bishops, at the conclusion of our meeting, I would like to say once more what a joy it is to be here in your country and to meet the people of Cameroon. I thank you for your warm welcome, a sign of the generosity of African hospitality. May the Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Africa, watch over all your diocesan communities. I entrust to her the entire people of Cameroon, and with all my heart I impart to you an affectionate Apostolic Blessing, which I also extend to the priests, men and women religious, to the catechists and to all the faithful of your dioceses.

Church of Christ-Roi in Tsinga - Yaoundé
Wednesday, 18 March 2009

VESPERS CELEBRATION

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER BENEDICT XVI

Dear Brother Cardinals and Bishops,
Priests and Deacons,
Consecrated Brothers and Sisters,
Friends from other Christian Confessions,
Dear Brothers and Sisters!

It is a great joy to meet here to give thanks to God in this Basilica of *Marie Reine des Apôtres* in Mvolyé, raised on the site of the first church built by the Missionaries of the Holy Spirit who came to bring the Good News to Cameroon. Reflecting the apostolic fervour of those men whose hearts embraced the whole of your country, this place symbolically contains every portion of your land. And so, dear brothers and sisters, in deep spiritual closeness to all the Christian communities where you render service, we raise our prayer of praise this evening to the Father of lights.

In the presence of the representatives of other Christian confessions, to whom I extend my respectful and fraternal greetings, I wish to reflect on the figure of Saint Joseph, setting out from the words of Scripture offered to us in this evening's liturgy.

Speaking to the crowd and to his disciples, Jesus declared: "You have only one Father" (*Mt* 23:9). There is but one fatherhood, that of God the Father, the one Creator of the world, "of all that is seen and unseen". Yet man, created in the image of God, has been granted a share in this one paternity of God (cf. *Eph* 3:15). Saint Joseph is a striking case of this, since he is a father, without fatherhood according to the flesh. He is not the biological father of Jesus, whose Father is God alone, and yet he lives his fatherhood fully and completely. To be

a father means above all to be at the service of life and growth. Saint Joseph, in this sense, gave proof of great devotion. For the sake of Christ he experienced persecution, exile and the poverty which this entails. He had to settle far from his native town. His only reward was to be with Christ. His readiness to do all these things illustrates the words of Saint Paul: "It is Christ the Lord whom you serve" (*Col* 3:24).

What is important is not to be a useless servant, but rather a "faithful and wise servant". The pairing of the two adjectives is not by chance. It suggests that understanding without fidelity, and fidelity without wisdom, are insufficient. One quality alone, without the other, would not enable us to assume fully the responsibility which God entrusts to us.

Dear brother priests, you are called to live out this fatherhood in the daily tasks of your ministry. In the words of the conciliar Constitution *Lumen Gentium*: "As their fathers in Christ, priests should care for the faithful whom they have spiritually begotten by Baptism and instruction" (No. 28). If this is the case, how can we not continually return to the very foundation of our priesthood, the Lord Jesus Christ? Our personal relationship with Jesus is constitutive of the way we wish to live our lives. He has called us his friends because everything which he learned from the Father he has made known to us (cf. *Jn* 15:15). In living out this deep friendship with Christ you will discover true freedom and deep joy. The ministerial priesthood entails a profound relationship with Christ who is given to us in the Eucharist. Let the celebration of the Eucharist be truly the centre of your priestly lives; in this way it will also be the centre of your ecclesial mission. Throughout our lives Christ calls us to share in his mission, to be his witnesses, so that his word may be proclaimed to all. In celebrating this sacrament in the Lord's name and in his person, the person of the priest cannot occupy centre stage; he is a servant, a humble instrument pointing to Christ, who offers himself in sacrifice for the salvation

of the world. As Jesus teaches us, "the leader must become as one who serves" (*Lk* 22:26). Origen writes that "Joseph understood that Jesus was superior to him even as he submitted to him, and, knowing the superiority of his charge, he commanded him with respect and moderation. Everyone should reflect on this: frequently a lesser man is placed over people who are greater, and it happens at times that an inferior is more worthy than the one who appears to be set above him. If a person of greater dignity understands this, then he will not be puffed up with pride because of his higher rank; he will know that his inferior may well be superior to him, even as Jesus was subject to Joseph" (*Homily on Saint Luke* XX, 5; S.C. p. 287).

Dear brothers in the priesthood, your pastoral ministry demands many sacrifices, yet it is also a source of great joy. Trusting in your Bishops, united fraternally to the whole presbyterate and supported by the portion of the People of God commended to your care, you will be able to respond faithfully to the Lord who has called you, just as he called Joseph to watch over Mary and the Child Jesus! May you always remain faithful, dear priests, to the promises that you made to God before your Bishop and in the presence of the whole community. The Successor of Peter thanks you for your generous devotion to the service of the Church, and he urges you not to be troubled by the difficulties you encounter along the way. To the young men who are preparing to join you, and to those still discerning a priestly vocation, I hold out once more the joy that comes from giving oneself completely to the service of God and the Church. Be courageous, then, and generously say "yes" to Christ!

Dear brothers and sisters who live out your commitment in the consecrated life or in ecclesial movements, I also encourage you to look to Saint Joseph. When Mary received the visit of the angel at the Annunciation, she was already betrothed to Joseph. In addressing Mary personally, the Lord already closely associates Joseph to the mystery of the Incarnation. Joseph agreed to be part of the great events

which God was beginning to bring about in the womb of his spouse. He took Mary into his home. He welcomed the mystery that was in Mary and the mystery that was Mary herself. He loved her with great respect, which is the mark of all authentic love. Joseph teaches us that it is possible to love without possessing. In contemplating Joseph, all men and women can, by God's grace, come to experience healing from their emotional wounds, if only they embrace the plan that God has begun to bring about in those close to him, just as Joseph entered into the work of redemption through Mary and as a result of what God had already done in her. Dear brothers and sisters from the ecclesial movements, may you be attentive to those around you, and may you reveal the loving face of God to the poor, especially by your works of mercy, your human and Christian education of young people, your programmes for the advancement of women, and in so many other ways!

The spiritual contribution offered by consecrated persons is likewise significant and indispensable for the life of the Church. This call to follow Christ is a gift for the whole People of God. According to your vocation, that of imitating Christ, chaste, poor and obedient, totally consecrated to the glory of his Father and the love of his brothers and sisters, you have the mission of bearing much-needed witness before our world to the primacy of God and of eternal life (cf. *Vita Consecrata*, 85). By your unreserved fidelity to your commitments, you are for the Church a sapling of life, springing up to serve the coming of God's Kingdom. At all times, and especially whenever your fidelity is put to the test, Saint Joseph reminds you of the value and meaning of your promises.

The consecrated life is a radical imitation of Christ. Hence the way you live ought to show clearly what inspires you, and your actions must not conceal your deepest identity. Do not be afraid of living to the full the self-offering that you have made to God, bearing authentic witness to it wherever you find yourselves. One particular example that

can encourage you to strive for holiness of life is that of Father Simon Mpeke, known as Baba Simon. All of you know how this "barefooted missionary" spent all his energies with selfless humility in the loving service of souls, heedless of the cares and sufferings involved in the material service of others.

Dear brothers and sisters, our meditation on the human and spiritual journey of Saint Joseph invites us to ponder his vocation in all its richness, and to see him as a constant model for all those who have devoted their lives to Christ in the priesthood, in the consecrated life or in the different forms of lay engagement. Joseph was caught up at every moment by the mystery of the Incarnation. Not only physically, but in his heart as well, Joseph reveals to us the secret of a humanity which dwells in the presence of mystery and is open to that mystery at every moment of everyday life. In Joseph, faith is not separated from action. His faith had a decisive effect on his actions. Paradoxically, it was by acting, by carrying out his responsibilities, that he stepped aside and left God free to act, placing no obstacles in his way. Joseph is a "just man" (*Mt* 1:19) because his existence is "ad-justed" to the word of God.

The life of Saint Joseph, lived in obedience to God's word, is an eloquent sign for all the disciples of Jesus who seek the unity of the Church. His example helps us to understand that it is only by complete submission to the will of God that we become effective workers in the service of his plan to gather together all mankind into one family, one assembly, one "*ecclesia*".

Dear friends from other Christian confessions, this quest for unity among the disciples of Christ represents a great challenge for us. It leads us first of all to be converted to the Person of Christ, to let ourselves be drawn more and more to him. In him, we are called to acknowledge one another as brothers and sisters, children of the same Father. During this year dedicated to the Apostle Paul, the great herald

of Jesus Christ and the Apostle of the Nations, let us all turn towards him so as to hear and learn "the faith and truth" which are the deepest reasons for the unity of Christ's disciples.

In conclusion, let us now turn to the spouse of Saint Joseph, the Virgin Mary, "Queen of Apostles", for under this title she is invoked as Patroness of Cameroon. To her I commend the consecration which each of you has received, as well as your desire to respond ever more faithfully to your calling and to the mission entrusted to you. Finally, I invoke her intercession for your beautiful country. Amen.

Basilica of Marie, Reine des Apôtres,

in the Mvolyé neighbourhood - Yaoundé

Wednesday, 18 March 2009

MEETING WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY OF CAMEROON

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER BENEDICT XVI

Apostolic Nunciature of Yaoundé
Thursday, 19 March 2009

My Dear Friends,

Grateful for this opportunity to meet representatives of the Muslim community in Cameroon, I express my heartfelt thanks to Mr Amadou Bello for his kind words of greeting extended to me on your behalf. Our encounter is a vivid sign of the desire we share with all people of good will – in Cameroon, throughout Africa and across the globe – to seek opportunities to exchange ideas about how religion makes an essential contribution to our understanding of culture and the world, and to the peaceful coexistence of all the members of the human family. Initiatives in Cameroon, such as the *Association Camerounaise pour le Dialogue Interreligieux*, illustrate how such dialogue enhances mutual understanding and assists in the building up of a stable and just political order.

Cameroon is home to thousands of Christians and Muslims, who often live, work and worship in the same neighbourhood. Both believe in one, merciful God who on the last day will judge mankind (cf. *Lumen Gentium,* 16). Together they bear witness to the fundamental values of family, social responsibility, obedience to God's law and loving concern for the sick and suffering. By patterning their lives on these virtues and teaching them to the young, Christians and Muslims not only show how they foster the full development of the human person, but also how they forge bonds of solidarity with one's neighbours and advance the common good.

My friends, I believe a particularly urgent task of religion today is to unveil the vast potential of human reason, which is itself God's gift and which is elevated by revelation and faith. Belief in the one God, far from stunting our capacity to understand ourselves and the world, broadens it. Far from setting us against the world, it commits us to it. We are called to help others see the subtle traces and mysterious presence of God in the world which he has marvellously created and continually sustains with his ineffable and all-embracing love. Although his infinite glory can never be directly grasped by our finite minds in this life, we nonetheless catch glimpses of it in the beauty that surrounds us. When men and women allow the magnificent order of the world and the splendour of human dignity to illumine their minds, they discover that what is "reasonable" extends far beyond what mathematics can calculate, logic can deduce and scientific experimentation can demonstrate; it includes the goodness and innate attractiveness of upright and ethical living made known to us in the very language of creation.

This insight prompts us to seek all that is right and just, to step outside the restricted sphere of our own self-interest and act for the good of others. Genuine religion thus widens the horizon of human understanding and stands at the base of any authentically human culture. It rejects all forms of violence and totalitarianism: not only on principles of faith, but also of right reason. Indeed, religion and reason mutually reinforce one another since religion is purified and structured by reason, and reason's full potential is unleashed by revelation and faith.

I therefore encourage you, my dear Muslim friends, to imbue society with the values that emerge from this perspective and elevate human culture, as we work together to build a civilization of love. May the enthusiastic cooperation of Muslims, Catholics and other Christians in Cameroon be a beacon to other African nations of the enormous potential of an interreligious commitment to peace, justice

and the common good!

With these sentiments, I once again express my gratitude for this auspicious occasion to meet you during my visit to Cameroon. I thank Almighty God for the blessings he has bestowed upon you and your fellow citizens, and I pray that the links that bind Christians and Muslims in their profound reverence for the one God will continue to grow stronger, so that they will reflect more clearly the wisdom of the Almighty, who enlightens the hearts of all mankind.

EUCHARISTIC CELEBRATION ON THE OCCASION OF THE PUBLICATION OF THE *INSTRUMENTUM LABORIS*

HOMILY OF THE HOLY FATHER BENEDICT XVI

Amadou Ahidjo Stadium of Yaoundé
Thursady, 19 March 2009

Dear Brother Bishops,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Praised be Jesus Christ who has gathered us in this stadium today that we may enter more deeply into his life!

Jesus Christ brings us together on this day when the Church, here in Cameroon and throughout the world, celebrates the Feast of Saint Joseph, Husband of the Virgin Mary. I begin by wishing a very happy feast day to all those who, like myself, have received the grace of bearing this beautiful name, and I ask Saint Joseph to grant them his special protection in guiding them towards the Lord Jesus Christ all the days of their life. I also extend cordial best wishes to all the parishes, schools, colleges, and institutions named after Saint Joseph. I thank Archbishop Tonyé-Bakot of Yaoundé for his kind words, and I warmly greet the representatives of the African Episcopal Conferences who have come to Yaoundé for the promulgation of the *Instrumentum Laboris* of the Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops.

How can we enter into the specific grace of this day? In a little while, at the end of Mass, the liturgy will remind us of the focal point of our meditation when it has us pray: "Lord, today you nourish us at

this altar as we celebrate the feast of Saint Joseph. Protect your Church always, and in your love watch over the gifts you have given us." We are asking the Lord to protect the Church always – and he does! – just as Joseph protected his family and kept watch over the child Jesus during his early years.

Our Gospel reading recalls this for us. The angel said to Joseph: "Do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home," (*Mt* 1:20) and that is precisely what he did: "he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him" (*Mt* 1:24). Why was Saint Matthew so keen to note Joseph's trust in the words received from the messenger of God, if not to invite us to imitate this same loving trust?

Although the first reading which we have just heard does not speak explicitly of Saint Joseph, it does teach us a good deal about him. The prophet Nathan, in obedience to God's command, tells David: "I will raise up your heir after you, sprung from your loins" (*2 Sam* 7:12). David must accept that he will die before seeing the fulfilment of this promise, which will come to pass "when (his) time comes" and he will rest "with (his) ancestors". We thus come to realize that one of mankind's most cherished desires – seeing the fruits of one's labours – is not always granted by God. I think of those among you who are mothers and fathers of families. Parents quite rightly desire to give the best of themselves to their children, and they want to see them achieve success.

Yet make no mistake about what this "success" entails: what God asks David to do is to place his trust in him. David himself will not see his heir who will have a throne "firm for ever" (*2 Sam* 7:16), for this heir, announced under the veil of prophecy, is Jesus. David puts his trust in God. In the same way, Joseph trusts God when he hears his messenger, the Angel, say to him: "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her" (*Mt* 1:20).

Throughout all of history, Joseph is the man who gives God the greatest display of trust, even in the face of such astonishing news.

Dear fathers and mothers here today, do you have trust in God who has called you to be the fathers and mothers of his adopted children? Do you accept that he is counting on you to pass on to your children the human and spiritual values that you yourselves have received and which will prepare them to live with love and respect for his holy name? At a time when so many people have no qualms about trying to impose the tyranny of materialism, with scant concern for the most deprived, you must be very careful. Africa in general, and Cameroon in particular, place themselves at risk if they do not recognize the True Author of Life! Brothers and sisters in Cameroon and throughout Africa, you who have received from God so many human virtues, take care of your souls! Do not let yourselves be captivated by selfish illusions and false ideals! Believe – yes! – continue to believe in God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – he alone truly loves you in the way you yearn to be loved, he alone can satisfy you, can bring stability to your lives. Only Christ is the way of Life.

God alone could grant Joseph the strength to trust the Angel. God alone will give you, dear married couples, the strength to raise your family as he wants. Ask it of him! God loves to be asked for what he wishes to give. Ask him for the grace of a true and ever more faithful love patterned after his own. As the Psalm magnificently puts it: his "love is established for ever, his loyalty will stand as long as the heavens" (*Ps* 88:3).

Just as on other continents, the family today – in your country and across Africa – is experiencing a difficult time; but fidelity to God will help see it through. Certain values of the traditional life have been overturned. Relationships between different generations have evolved in a way that no longer favours the transmission of accumulated knowledge and inherited wisdom. Too often we witness a rural exodus

not unlike that known in many other periods of human history. The quality of family ties is deeply affected by this. Uprooted and fragile members of the younger generation who often – sadly – are without gainful employment, seek to cure their pain by living in ephemeral and man-made paradises which we know will never guarantee the human being a deep, abiding happiness. Sometimes the African people too are constrained to flee from themselves and abandon everything that once made up their interior richness. Confronted with the phenomenon of rapid urbanization, they leave the land, physically and morally: not as Abraham had done in response to the Lord's call, but as a kind of interior exile which alienates them from their very being, from their brothers and sisters, and from God himself.

Is this an irreversible, inevitable development? By no means! More than ever, we must "hope against all hope" (*Rom* 4:18). Here I wish to acknowledge with appreciation and gratitude the remarkable work done by countless associations that promote the life of faith and the practice of charity. May they be warmly thanked! May they find in the word of God renewed strength to carry out their projects for the integral development of the human person in Africa, especially in Cameroon!

The first priority will consist in restoring a sense of the acceptance of life as a gift from God. According to both Sacred Scripture and the wisest traditions of your continent, the arrival of a child is always a gift, a blessing from God. Today it is high time to place greater emphasis on this: every human being, every tiny human person, however weak, is created "in the image and likeness of God" (*Gen* 1:27). Every person must live! Death must not prevail over life! Death will never have the last word!

Sons and daughters of Africa, do not be afraid to believe, to hope, and to love; do not be afraid to say that Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life, and that we can be saved by him alone. Saint Paul is indeed an

inspired author given to the Church by the Holy Spirit as a "teacher of nations" (*1 Tim* 2:7) when he tells us that Abraham, "hoping against hope, believed that he should become the father of many nations; as he had been told, 'So shall your descendants be'" (*Rom* 4:18).

"Hoping against hope": is this not a magnificent description of a Christian? Africa is called to hope through you and in you! With Jesus Christ, who trod the African soil, Africa can become the continent of hope! We are all members of the peoples that God gave to Abraham as his descendants. Each and every one of us was thought, willed and loved by God. Each and every one of us has a role to play in the plan of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. If discouragement overwhelms you, think of the faith of Joseph; if anxiety has its grip on you, think of the hope of Joseph, that descendant of Abraham who hoped against hope; if exasperation or hatred seizes you, think of the love of Joseph, who was the first man to set eyes on the human face of God in the person of the Infant conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary. Let us praise and thank Christ for having drawn so close to us, and for giving us Joseph as an example and model of love for him.

Dear brothers and sisters, I want to say to you once more from the bottom of my heart: like Joseph, do not be afraid to take Mary into your home, that is to say do not be afraid to love the Church. Mary, Mother of the Church, will teach you to follow your pastors, to love your bishops, your priests, your deacons and your catechists; to heed what they teach you and to pray for their intentions. Husbands, look upon the love of Joseph for Mary and Jesus; those preparing for marriage, treat your future spouse as Joseph did; those of you who have given yourselves to God in celibacy, reflect upon the teaching of the Church, our Mother: "Virginity or celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom of God not only does not contradict the dignity of marriage but presupposes and confirms it. Marriage and virginity are two ways of expressing and living the one mystery of the Covenant of God with his people" (*Redemptoris Custos,* 20).

Once more, I wish to extend a particular word of encouragement to fathers so that they may take Saint Joseph as their model. He who kept watch over the Son of Man is able to teach them the deepest meaning of their own fatherhood. In the same way, each father receives his children from God, and they are created in God's own image and likeness. Saint Joseph was the spouse of Mary. In the same way, each father sees himself entrusted with the mystery of womanhood through his own wife. Dear fathers, like Saint Joseph, respect and love your spouse; and by your love and your wise presence, lead your children to God where they must be (cf. *Lk* 2:49).

Finally, to all the young people present, I offer words of friendship and encouragement: as you face the challenges of life, take courage! Your life is priceless in the eyes of God! Let Christ take hold of you, agree to pledge your love to him, and – why not? – maybe even do so in the priesthood or in the consecrated life! This is the supreme service. To the children who no longer have a father, or who live abandoned in the poverty of the streets, to those forcibly separated from their parents, to the maltreated and abused, to those constrained to join paramilitary forces that are terrorizing some countries, I would like to say: God loves you, he has not forgotten you, and Saint Joseph protects you! Invoke him with confidence.

May God bless you and watch over you! May he give you the grace to keep advancing towards him with fidelity! May he give stability to your lives so that you may reap the fruits he awaits from you! May he make you witnesses of his love here in Cameroon and to the ends of the earth! I fervently beg him to give you a taste of the joy of belonging to him, now and for ever. Amen.

MEETING WITH THE SICK

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER BENEDICT XVI

Card. Paul Emile Léger Centre - CNRH of Yaoundé
Thursday, 19 March 2009

Dear Cardinals,
Minister of Social Affairs,
Health Minister,
Brother Bishops,
Bishop Joseph Djida,
Director of the Léger Centre,
Dear Carers and Patients,

I have been looking forward to spending this time with you, and I am happy to be able to greet you, dear brothers and sisters who bear the burden of sickness and suffering. You are not alone in your pain, for Christ himself is close to all who suffer. He reveals to the sick and infirm their place in the heart of God and in society. The Evangelist Mark gives us the example of the healing of Peter's mother-in-law: "Immediately they told him of her", it is written, Jesus "came and took her by the hand and lifted her up" (*Mk* 1:30-31). In this Gospel passage, we see Jesus spending a day with the sick in order to bring them relief. He thereby shows us, through specific actions, his fraternal tenderness and benevolence towards all the broken-hearted, all whose bodies are wounded.

This Centre is named after Cardinal Paul-Émile Léger, a son of Canada who came among you to bring relief to bodies and souls. As I stand here today, I am mindful of all the people in hospitals, in specialized health centres or clinics, who suffer from a disability, mental or physical. I also think of those whose flesh bears the scars of

wars and violence. I remember too all the sick and, especially here in Africa, the victims of such diseases as Aids, malaria and tuberculosis. I know how actively engaged the Catholic Church in your country is in the fight against these terrible afflictions, and I encourage you to pursue this urgent task with great determination. To those of you who endure the trials of sickness and suffering, and to all your families, I wish to bring a word of comfort from the Lord, to renew my support, and to invite you to turn towards Christ and towards Mary, whom he has given to us as our mother. She knew suffering, and she followed her Son along the path to Calvary, preserving in her heart that love which Jesus came to bring to all people.

Faced with suffering, sickness and death, it is tempting to cry out in pain, as Job did, whose name means "suffering" (cf. Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Job*, I,1,15). Even Jesus cried out, shortly before his death (cf. *Mk* 15:37; *Heb* 5:7). As our condition deteriorates, our anguish increases; some are tempted to doubt whether God is present in their lives. Job, however, was conscious of God's presence; his was not a cry of rebellion, but, from the depths of his sorrow, he allowed his trust to grow (cf. *Job* 19; 42:2-6). His friends, like each of us when faced with the suffering of a loved one, tried to console him, but they used hollow and empty words.

In the presence of such torment, we feel powerless and we cannot find the right words. Before a brother or sister plunged into the mystery of the Cross, a respectful and compassionate silence, a prayerful presence, a gesture of tenderness and comfort, a kind look, a smile, often achieve more than many words. This was the experience of a small group of men and women, including the Virgin Mary and the Apostle John, who followed Jesus in the depths of his suffering at the time of his Passion and his death on the Cross. Among them, the Gospel tells us, was an African, Simon of Cyrene. He was given the task of helping Jesus to carry his Cross on the way to Golgotha. This man, albeit through no choice of his own, came to the aid of the

Man of Sorrows when he had been abandoned by all his followers and handed over to blind violence. History tells us, then, that an African, a son of your continent, took part, at the price of his own suffering, in the infinite suffering of the one who ransomed all men, including his executioners. Simon of Cyrene could not have known that it was his Saviour who stood there before him. He was "drafted in" to assist him (cf. *Mk* 15:21); he was constrained, forced to do so. It is hard to accept to carry someone else's cross. Only after the resurrection could he have understood what he had done. Brothers and sisters, it is the same for each of us: in the depths of our anguish, of our own rebellion, Christ offers us his loving presence even if we find it hard to understand that he is at our side. Only the Lord's final victory will reveal for us the definitive meaning of our trials.

Can it not be said that every African is in some sense a member of the family of Simon of Cyrene? Every African who suffers, indeed every person who suffers, helps Christ to carry his Cross and climbs with him the path to Golgotha in order one day to rise again with him. When we see the infamy to which Jesus was subjected, when we contemplate his face on the Cross, when we recognize his appalling suffering, we can glimpse, through faith, the radiant face of the Risen Lord who tells us that suffering and sickness will not have the last word in our human lives. I pray, dear brothers and sisters, that you will be able to recognize yourselves in "Simon of Cyrene". I pray, dear brothers and sisters who are sick, that many of you will encounter a Simon at your bedside.

Since the resurrection, and right up to our own time, there have been countless witnesses who have turned, with faith and hope, towards the Saviour of mankind, recognizing his presence at the heart of their suffering. May the Father of mercies graciously grant the prayers of all who turn to him. He answers our call and our prayer, as and when he wishes, for our good and not according to our desires. It is for us to discern his response and to accept the gifts that he offers us

as a grace. Let us fix our gaze upon the Crucified one, with faith and courage, for from him come life, comfort, and healing. Let us learn to gaze on him who desires our good and knows how to wipe the tears from our eyes. Let us learn to abandon ourselves into his embrace, like a small child in his mother's arms.

The saints have given us a fine example by living lives entirely dedicated to God, our Father. Saint Teresa of Avila, who placed her monastery under the protection of Saint Joseph, was healed from a particular ailment on the very day of his feast. She said she had never prayed to him in vain, and she recommended him to all who claimed not to know how to pray: "I do not understand", she wrote, "how anyone can think of the Queen of angels and of all the trials she suffered during the early years of the divine child Jesus, without thanking Saint Joseph for the perfect devotion with which he came to assist them both. May anyone who lacks a teacher of prayer choose this admirable Saint as a master, for under his guidance no one need be afraid of going astray" (*Life*, 6). Saint Teresa saw in Saint Joseph not only an intercessor for bodily health, but also an intercessor for the health of the soul, a teacher of prayer.

Dear friends who are sick, we too can choose him as a teacher of prayer, whatever our state of health, and all families can do the same. I am thinking especially of hospital staff, and all those who work in the field of health care. By accompanying those who suffer, through the care and attention you offer them, you accomplish an act of charity and love that God recognizes: "I was sick, and you visited me" (*Mt* 25:36). All of you, doctors and researchers, have the task of putting into practice every legitimate form of pain relief; you are called, in the first place, to protect human life, you are the defenders of life from conception to natural death. For every person, respect for life is a right and at the same time a duty, since all life is a gift from God. With you, I would like to give thanks to the Lord for all who, in one way or another, work in the service of the suffering. I encourage

priests and those who visit the sick to commit themselves to an active and friendly presence in their hospital chaplaincy, or to assure an ecclesial presence in the home, for the comfort and spiritual support of the sick. In accordance with his promise, God will give you a just reward, and he will recompense you in heaven.

Before greeting you more personally, and then taking my leave, I would like to assure each of you of my affection and my prayer. I also want to express my wish that none of you should ever feel alone. In fact it is the task of every human person, created in the image of Christ, to be a good neighbour to those around him. I entrust all of you to the intercession of the Virgin Mary, our Mother, and to the intercession of Saint Joseph. May God grant that we become bearers for one another of the mercy, tenderness and love of our God, and may he bless you!

MEETING WITH THE SPECIAL COUNCIL OF THE SYNOD FOR AFRICA

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER BENEDICT XVI

Apostolic Nunciature of Yaoundé
Thursday, 19 March 2009

Dear Cardinals,
Dear Brother Bishops,

It is with deep joy that I greet all of you here in Africa. A First Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops was convoked for Africa in 1994 by my venerable predecessor, the Servant of God John Paul II, as a sign of his pastoral solicitude for this continent so rich both in promise and in pressing human, cultural and spiritual needs. This morning I called Africa "the continent of hope". I recall with gratitude the signing of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* here at the Apostolic Nunciature fourteen years ago on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, 14 September 1995.

My thanks go to Archbishop Nikola Eterović, Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops, for the words which he addressed to me in your name, as he introduced this meeting on African soil with you, dear members of the Special Council for Africa. The whole Church looks to our meeting today in anticipation of the Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops, which, God willing, will be celebrated next October, on the theme: "The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace: 'You are the Salt of the Earth … You are the Light of the World' (*Mt* 5:13-14)".

I sincerely thank the Cardinals, the Archbishops and Bishops who are members of the Special Council for Africa for their expert collaboration in the drawing up of the *Lineamenta* and the *Instumentum*

Laboris. I am grateful to you, dear Brothers in the Episcopate, for having also presented in your contributions several important aspects of the present ecclesial and social situation in your countries of origin and in the region. In this way you have emphasized the great dynamism of the Church in Africa, but you have also evoked the challenges which the Synod needs to examine, so that the growth of the Church in Africa will be not only quantitative but qualitative as well.

Dear friends, at the beginning of my address, I consider it important to stress that your continent has been blessed by our Lord Jesus himself. At the dawn of his earthly life, sad circumstances led him to set foot on African soil. God chose your continent to become the dwelling-place of his Son. In Jesus, God drew near to all men and women, of course, but also, in a particular way, to the men and women of Africa. Africa is where the Son of God was weaned, where he was offered effective sanctuary. In Jesus, some two thousand years ago, God himself brought salt and light to Africa. From that time on, the seed of his presence was buried deep within the hearts of this dear continent, and it has blossomed gradually, beyond and within the vicissitudes of its human history. As a result of the coming of Christ who blessed it with his physical presence, Africa has received a particular vocation to know Christ. Let Africans be proud of this! In meditating upon, and in coming to a deeper spiritual and theological appreciation of this first stage of the *kenosis*, Africa will be able to find the strength needed to face its sometimes difficult daily existence, and thus it will be able to discover immense spaces of faith and hope which will help it to grow in God.

The intimate bond existing between Africa and Christianity from the beginning can be illustrated by recalling some significant moments in the Christian history of this continent.

According to the venerable patristic tradition, the Evangelist Saint Mark, who "handed down in writing the preaching of Peter"

(Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* III, I, 1), came to Alexandria to give new life to the seed planted by the Lord. This Evangelist bore witness in Africa to the death of the Son of God on the Cross – the final moment of the *kenosis* – and of his sovereign exaltation, in order that "every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (*Phil* 2:11). The Good News of the coming of the Kingdom of God spread rapidly in North Africa, where it raised up distinguished martyrs and saints, and produced outstanding theologians.

Christianity lasted for almost a millennium in the north-eastern part of your continent, after being put to the test by the vicissitudes of history. With the arrival of Europeans seeking the passage to the Indies in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the sub-Saharan peoples encountered Christ. The coastal peoples were the first to receive Baptism. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, sub-Saharan Africa saw the arrival of missionaries, men and women from throughout the West, from Latin America and even from Asia. I wish to pay homage to the generosity of their unconditional response to the Lord's call, and to their ardent apostolic zeal. Here, I would also like to speak of the African catechists, the inseparable companions of the missionaries in evangelization.

God prepared the hearts of certain African lay persons, men and women, young and old alike, to receive his gifts and to bring the light of his word to their brothers and sisters. Laity in the midst of laity, they were able to find in their ancestral languages the words of God which would touch the hearts of their brothers and sisters. They were able to share the savour of the salt of the word and to give splendour to the light of the sacraments which they proclaimed. They accompanied families in their spiritual growth, they encouraged priestly and religious vocations, and they served as a link between their communities and the priests and Bishops. Quite naturally, they brought about a successful inculturation which yielded wondrous fruit (cf. *Mk* 4:20). The catechists allowed their "light to shine before

others" (*Mt* 5:16), for in seeing the good they did, entire peoples were able to give glory to Our Father in heaven. This was a case of Africans evangelizing other Africans. In evoking their glorious memory, I greet and encourage their worthy successors who work today with the same selflessness, the same apostolic courage and the same faith as their predecessors. May God bless them generously! During this period, Africa was also blessed with numerous saints. I will content myself with naming the martyrs of Uganda, the great missionaries Anne-Marie Javouhey and Daniele Comboni, as well as Sister Anuarite Nengapeta and the catechist Isidore Bakanja, without forgetting the humble Josephine Bakhita.

We find ourselves presently at a historical moment which coincides from the civil standpoint with regained independence and from the ecclesial standpoint with the Second Vatican Council. During this time the Church in Africa contributed to and accompanied the building of new national identities and, at the same time, sought to translate the identity of Christ along its own ways. As the hierarchy became increasingly African following Pope Pius XII's ordination of Bishops from your continent, theological reflection began to ferment quickly. It would be well for your theologians today to continue to probe the depth of the Trinitarian mystery and its meaning for everyday African life. This century will perhaps permit, by God's grace, the rebirth, on your continent, albeit certainly under a different and new form, of the prestigious School of Alexandria. Why could we not hope that Africans today and the universal Church might thereby be furnished with great theologians and spiritual masters capable of contributing to the sanctification of those who dwell in this continent and throughout the Church? The First Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops helped to point out the directions to be taken, and it brought out, among other things, the need to appreciate more deeply and to incarnate the mystery of the Church-as-Family.

I would now like to suggest some reflections about the specific

theme of the Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops, namely: reconciliation, justice and peace.

According to the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, "the Church, in Christ, is in the nature of sacrament – a sign and instrument of communion with God and of unity among all men and women" (*Lumen Gentium*, 1). To carry out her mission well, the Church must be a community of persons reconciled with God and among themselves. In this way, she can proclaim the Good News of reconciliation to contemporary society, which unfortunately experiences in many places conflicts, acts of violence, war and hatred. Your continent, sadly, has not been spared, and it has been and continues to be a theatre of grave tragedies which cry out for true reconciliation between peoples, ethnic groups and individuals. For us Christians, this reconciliation is rooted in the merciful love of God the Father, and it is accomplished through the person of Christ Jesus who, in the Holy Spirit, has offered the grace of reconciliation to all. Its consequences will be shown, then, in the justice and peace which are indispensable for building a better world.

Truly, what is more dramatic, in the present socio-political and economic context of the African continent, than the often savage conflicts between ethnic groups or peoples bound by brotherhood? And if the Synod of 1994 insisted on the Church as Family of God, what can this year's Synod contribute to the building up of Africa, thirsting for reconciliation and in pursuit of justice and peace? The local or regional wars, massacres and genocides perpetrated on the continent must challenge us in a special way: if it is true that in Jesus Christ we belong to the same family and share the same life – since in our veins there flows the Blood of Christ himself, who has made us children of God, members of God's Family – there must no longer be hatred, injustice and internecine war.

Cognizant of the growth of violence and the emergence of

selfishness in Africa, Cardinal Bernardin Gantin of venerable memory called in 1988 for a theology of fraternity as a response to the pressing appeals of the poor and the little ones (*L'Osservatore Romano*, French edition, 12 April 1988, pp. 4-5). Perhaps he had in mind the words of the African Lactantius, written at the dawn of the fourth century: "The first duty of justice is to recognize others as brothers and sisters. Indeed, if the same God created us and gave us birth in the same condition, in view of righteousness and life eternal, we are surely united by bonds of brotherhood: whoever does not acknowledge those bonds is unjust" (*Divine Institutions* 54, 4-5: S.C. 335, p. 210). The Church, as the Family of God in Africa, made a preferential option for the poor at the First Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. In this way she showed that the situation of dehumanization and oppression afflicting the African peoples is not irreversible; on the contrary, she set before everyone a challenge: that of conversion, holiness and integrity.

The Son, through whom God speaks to us, is himself the Word made flesh. This was the subject of the discussions at the recent Twelfth General Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. Having become flesh, this Word is at the origin of all that we are and all that we do; he is the foundation of every life. It is therefore on the basis of this Word that we need to enhance African traditions, and to correct and perfect their concept of life, humanity and the family. Christ Jesus, the Word of life, is the source and fulfilment of all our lives, for the Lord Jesus is the one mediator and redeemer.

It is urgent that Christian communities increasingly become places of profound listening to the word of God and meditative reading of sacred Scripture. It is through such meditative and communitarian reading in the Church that every Christian encounters the Risen Christ, who speaks to him and offers renewed hope in the fullness of life which he gives to the world.

As for the Eucharist, it makes the Lord truly present in history.

Through the reality of his Body and his Blood, the whole Christ makes himself substantially present in our lives. He is with us always, until the end of time (cf. *Mt* 28:20) and he sends us back to our daily lives so that we can fill them with his presence. In the Eucharist, it becomes clearly evident that our life is a relationship of communion with God, with our brothers and sisters, and with all creation. The Eucharist is the source of a unity reconciled in peace.

The word of life and the Bread of life offer light and nourishment as medicine and food for our journey in fidelity to the Teacher and Shepherd of our souls, so that the Church in Africa can carry out the service of reconciliation, justice and peace, in accordance with the programme of life provided by the Lord himself: "You are the salt of the earth ... You are the light of the world" (*Mt* 5:13-14). If they are truly to be this, the faithful must undergo conversion and follow Jesus Christ; they must become his disciples in order to be witnesses of his saving power. During his earthly life, Jesus was "mighty in deed and word" (*Lk* 24:19). By his resurrection, he has subjected to himself every authority and power (cf. *Col* 2:15), every power of evil, in order to set free those who are baptized in his name. "For freedom Christ has set us free" (*Gal* 5:1).

The Christian vocation consists in letting oneself be freed by Jesus Christ. He has conquered sin and death and he offers to all the fullness of life. In the Lord Jesus there is no more Jew or Gentile, man or woman (cf. *Gal* 3:28). In his flesh he has reconciled all peoples. In the power of the Holy Spirit, I appeal to everyone: "Be reconciled to God!" (*2 Cor* 5:20). No ethnic or cultural difference, no difference of race, sex or religion must become a cause for dispute among you. You are all children of the one God, our Father, who is in heaven. With this conviction, it will then be possible to build a more just and peaceful Africa, an Africa worthy of the legitimate expectations of all its children.

In conclusion, I invite you to advance the preparation of the Synodal event by reciting, together with the faithful, the prayer found at the end of the *Instumentum Laboris* which I presented to you this morning, a prayer for the successful outcome of the Synodal Assembly. Together, my brothers, let us pray:

"Holy Mary, Mother of God, Protectress of Africa, you have given the world its true light, Jesus Christ. By your obedience to the Father and by the grace of the Holy Spirit, you have given us the source of our reconciliation and our joy.

Mother of tenderness and wisdom, show us Jesus, your Son and the Son of God, sustain our journey of conversion, so that Jesus may enlighten us with his Glory in all the settings of our personal, family and social life.

Mother full of Mercy and Justice, by your docility to the Spirit, the Comforter, obtain for us the grace to be witnesses of the Risen Lord, so that we may become ever more fully the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

Mother of Perpetual Succour, to your maternal intercession we entrust the preparation and the fruits of the Second Synod for Africa. Queen of Peace, pray for us! Our Lady of Africa, pray for us!"

MEETING WITH POLITICAL AND CIVIL AUTHORITIES AND THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER BENEDICT XVI

Presidential Palace in Luanda
Friday, 20 March 2009

Mr President,
Your Excellencies,
Dear Brother Bishops,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As a kind gesture of hospitality President José Eduardo dos Santos has welcomed us here to his residence. In so doing he has enabled me to greet you all with great joy and to wish you every success in the formidable responsibilities you bear in serving society and the whole human family in the civic, political and the diplomatic sectors. Mr President, thank you for your welcome, for the kind words of esteem you have just addressed to me as the Successor of Peter, and for your appreciation of the work of the Catholic Church for this beloved nation.

Friends, you are the protagonists and witnesses of an Angola which is on the road to recovery. In the wake of the twenty-seven-year civil war that ravaged this country, peace has begun to take root, bringing with it the fruits of stability and freedom. The Government's tangible efforts to establish an infrastructure and to rebuild the institutions fundamental to development and the well-being of society have begun to foster hope among the nation's citizens. Multilateral agencies too have made their contribution, determined to overcome particular interests in order to work for the common good. There is also the example of those honest teachers, medical workers, and

civil servants who, on meagre wages, serve their communities with integrity and compassion, and there are countless others who selflessly undertake voluntary work at the service of the most needy. May God bless them abundantly! May their charity multiply!

Angola knows that the time has come for Africa to be the Continent of Hope! All upright human conduct is hope in action. Our actions are never indifferent before God. Nor are they indifferent for the unfolding of history. Friends, armed with integrity, magnanimity and compassion, you can transform this continent, freeing your people from the scourges of greed, violence and unrest and leading them along the path marked with the principles indispensable to every modern civic democracy: respect and promotion of human rights, transparent governance, an independent judiciary, a free press, a civil service of integrity, a properly functioning network of schools and hospitals, and – most pressing – a determination born from the conversion of hearts to excise corruption once and for all. In my Message for the World Day of Peace this year, I drew particular attention to the need for an ethical approach to development. In fact, the peoples of this continent are rightly calling out, not simply for more programmes and protocols, but for a deep-seated, lasting conversion of hearts to sincere solidarity. Their plea to those serving in politics, public service, international agencies, and multinational companies is simply this: stand alongside us in a profoundly human way; accompany us, and our families and our communities (cf. No. 13)!

Social and economic development in Africa bring into partnership national leadership together with regional initiatives and international resolve. Such partnerships require that African nations be seen not simply as the receivers of others' plans and solutions. African men and women themselves, working together for the good of their communities, should be the primary agents of their own development. In this regard, there are a growing number of effective initiatives which merit support. Among them are: the New Partnership for

Africa's Development (NEPAD), the Pact on Security, Stability, and Development in the Great Lakes Region, together with the "Kimberley Process", the "Publish What You Pay Coalition" and the "Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative". Their common goal is to promote transparency, honest business practice and good governance. In regard to the international community as a whole, of pressing importance are co-ordinated efforts to address the issue of climate change, the full and fair implementation of the development commitments of the Doha round and likewise the implementation of the oft-repeated promise by developed countries to commit 0.7% of their Gross National Product for official development assistance. This undertaking is all the more necessary in view of the world's current financial turmoil, and must not become one of its casualties.

Friends, I wish to say that my visit to Cameroon and to Angola has stirred within me that profound human delight at being among families. Indeed I think that those who come from other continents can learn afresh from Africa that "the family is the foundation on which the social edifice is built" (*Ecclesia in Africa*, 80). Yet the strains upon families, as we all know, are many indeed: anxiety and ignominy caused by poverty, unemployment, disease and displacement, to mention but a few. Particularly disturbing is the crushing yoke of discrimination that women and girls so often endure, not to mention the unspeakable practice of sexual violence and exploitation which causes such humiliation and trauma. I must also mention a further area of grave concern: the policies of those who, claiming to improve the "social edifice", threaten its very foundations. How bitter the irony of those who promote abortion as a form of "maternal" healthcare! How disconcerting the claim that the termination of life is a matter of reproductive health (cf. *Maputo Protocol,* art. 14)!

The Church, in accordance with the will of her divine founder, you will always find standing alongside the poorest of this continent. I wish to assure each of you that for her part, through diocesan

initiatives, through the innumerable educational, healthcare and social works of Religious Orders, and through the development programmes of Caritas and other agencies, the Church will continue to do all she can to support families - including those suffering the harrowing effects of HIV/Aids - and to uphold the equal dignity of women and men, realized in harmonious complementarity. The Christian spiritual journey is one of daily conversion. To this the Church invites all leaders so that the path opened for all humanity will be one of truth, integrity, respect and compassion.

Mr President, I wish to express once again my sincere thanks for welcoming us here to your home. I thank all of you here assembled for your gracious presence and your attention. Be assured of my prayers for you and your families and for all the men, women and children of majestic Africa! God bless you all!

MEETING WITH THE BISHOPS OF ANGOLA AND SÃO TOMÉ

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER BENEDICT XVI

Chapel of the Apostolic Nunciature - Luanda
Friday, 20 March 2009

Dear Cardinal do Nascimento,
Dear Bishops of Angola and São Tomé,

am delighted to meet you in this house which Angola has given to the Successor of Peter – ordinarily in the person of his Representative – as a visible expression of the bonds uniting the people of Angola and São Tomé to the Catholic Church, which for over five hundred years has rejoiced to count you among her children. May our prayer of praise rise up, harmonious and fervent, to God the Father who, by the workings and grace of the Holy Spirit, unceasingly gives birth to the Mystical Body of his Son. Here, in these lands, the Church bears the distinctive features of your native peoples, yet without losing the Jewish, Roman, Portuguese and other characteristics she had acquired earlier, for "as many of you as were baptized into Christ ... are one in Christ Jesus" (*Gal* 3:27-28).

Venerable Brothers, God in his goodness, in order to carry forward today this work of bringing to birth the whole Christ through faith and Baptism, willed to call upon you and me. It should be no surprise, then, that we sense the pangs of birth until Christ is completely formed in the heart of your people (cf. *Gal* 4:19). God will reward you for all the apostolic work which you have accomplished in difficult conditions, both during the war and at the present time, in spite of so many limitations, thus helping to give the Church in Angola and in São Tomé and Principe that dynamism which everyone acknowledges.

Conscious of the ministry I have been called to carry out in the service of ecclesial communion, I ask you to assure your communities of my constant concern for them. I greet them all with heartfelt affection in the person of the individual members of this Episcopal Conference. I offer a particular greeting to your President, Archbishop Damião Franklin, whom I thank for his words of welcome in your name, emphasizing your commitment to clear discernment and, as a result, to a unified plan to be implemented in your diocesan communities for the purpose of "equipping the saints ... until all of us come to the maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ" (*Eph* 4:12-13). Indeed, as a corrective to a widespread relativism which acknowledges nothing as definitive and, even more, tends to make its ultimate measure the individual and his personal caprice, we hold out another measure: the Son of God, who is also true man. Christ is the measure of true humanism. The Christian marked by an adult and mature faith is not one who is borne along by the waves of fashion and the latest novelties, but one who lives deeply rooted in the friendship of Christ. This friendship opens us up to all that is good, and it provides us with the criterion for discerning between error and truth.

Certainly a decisive factor for the future of the faith and the overall direction of national life is the area of culture. Here the Church enjoys renowned academic institutions, which must make it a point of honour to enable the voice of Catholics to be constantly heard in discussion of cultural issues affecting national life, thus reinforcing the ability to explore rationally, in the light of faith, the many questions emerging in the various areas of science and of life. Culture and models of behaviour are nowadays more and more conditioned and shaped by the images set forth by the communications media. For this reason, I wish to acknowledge your praiseworthy efforts to develop, in this area too, a communications strategy which will enable you to provide everyone with a Christian interpretation of human events, problems and realities.

One such human reality, presently faced with numerous difficulties and threats, is the family. Families are particularly in need of evangelization and practical support, since, in addition to the fragility and lack of inner stability of so many conjugal unions, there is the widespread tendency in society and culture to call into question the unique nature and specific mission of the family based on marriage. In your pastoral concern, which extends to every human being, continue to raise your voice in defence of the sacredness of human life and the value of the institution of marriage, as well as in promotion of the family's proper role in the Church and in society, at the same time demanding economic and legislative measures to support the family in bearing and raising children.

I rejoice that your nations have so many vibrant communities of faith, a committed laity devoted to many works of the apostolate, and a significant number of vocations to the ordained ministry and the consecrated life, especially the contemplative life. They represent a genuine sign of hope for the future. As the clergy becomes increasingly indigenous, I wish to pay homage to the work which has been patiently and heroically carried out by the missionaries in proclaiming Christ and his Gospel and in giving birth to the Christian communities for which you today are responsible. I urge you to be deeply concerned for your priests, attentive to their continuing formation on both the theological and spiritual levels, and alert to the conditions in which they live and exercise their specific mission, so that they can be authentic witnesses of the word they proclaim and the sacraments they celebrate. In the gift of themselves to Christ and to the people whom they shepherd, may they remain faithful to the demands of their state of life, and live out their priestly ministry as a true path to holiness, striving to become saints and in this way to raise up new saints all around them.

Dear Brothers, I entrust myself to your prayerful remembrance before the Lord, while for my part I assure you of a particular prayer to the one who is truly the Spouse of the Church, which he loves, protects

and nourishes: the only-begotten Son of the living God, Jesus Christ our Lord. May he sustain your pastoral commitments by his grace, so that they will prove fruitful in accordance with the example and under the protection of the Immaculate Heart of the Virgin Mary. With these sentiments I impart my Apostolic Blessing to each of you, to your priests, and to the consecrated persons, seminarians, catechists and all the lay faithful who are members of the flock which God has entrusted to you.

EUCHARISTIC CELEBRATION WITH THE BISHOPS, PRIESTS, RELIGIOUS PEOPLE, ECCLESIAL MOVEMENTS AND CATECHISTS OF ANGOLA AND SÃO TOMÉ

HOMILY OF THE HOLY FATHER BENEDICT XVI

Saint Paul's Church in Luanda
Saturday, 21 March 2009

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Beloved labourers in the Lord's vineyard,

As we have just heard, the children of Israel said to one another, "let us make haste to know the Lord." They encouraged one another with these words amid their many tribulations. These misfortunes had overtaken them – the Prophet explains – because they lived without knowledge of God; their hearts were poor in love. The only physician capable of healing them was the Lord. Indeed, he himself, as a good physician, opened their wounds so that the sore might heal. And the people made up their mind: "Come, let us return to the Lord; for he has torn, that he may heal us" (*Hos* 6:1). Thus human poverty was to intersect with divine mercy, which desires only to embrace the poor.

We see this in the Gospel passage that we have just heard: "Two men went up into the temple to pray"; the one "went down to his house justified rather than the other" (*Lk* 18:10, 14). The latter had paraded all his merits before God, virtually making God his debtor. Deep down, he felt no need for God, even though he thanked him for letting him become so perfect, "not like this tax collector". And yet it was the tax collector who went down to his house justified. Conscious of his sins, and so not even lifting his head – although in his trust he is completely turned towards Heaven – he awaits everything from the

Lord: "O God, be merciful to me, a sinner" (*Lk* 18:13). He knocks on the door of mercy, which then opens and justifies him, for, as Jesus concludes: "everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted" (*Lk* 18:14).

Saint Paul, the patron saint of the city of Luanda and of this splendid church built some fifty years ago, speaks to us from personal experience about this God who is rich in mercy. I wanted to highlight the second millennium of the birth of Saint Paul by celebrating the present Pauline Year, so that we can learn from him how to know Jesus Christ more fully. This is the testimony which Paul has bequeathed to us: "The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. And I am the foremost of sinners; but I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience for an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life" (*1 Tim* 1:15-16). In the course of the centuries, the number of people touched by grace has continually grown. You and I are among them. Let us give thanks to God because he has called us to be part of this age-long procession and thus to advance towards the future. In the footsteps of all Jesus' followers, let us join them in following Christ himself and thus enter into the Light.

Dear brothers and sisters, I feel great joy to be here today with you, my fellow-workers in the Lord's vineyard, where you labour daily to prepare the wine of divine mercy and to pour it out as balm on the wounds of your people who have suffered so many tribulations. Archbishop Gabriel Mbilingi has spoken of your hopes and your struggles in his gracious words of welcome. With a heart full of gratitude and hope I greet you all – women and men devoted to the cause of Jesus Christ – those of you who are here and the many others whom you represent: Bishops, priests, consecrated men and women, seminarians, catechists, leaders of the many different movements and associations present in this beloved Church of God. I would also like to mention the contemplative women religious, an unseen but extremely

fruitful presence for our common journey. Finally, let me offer a particular greeting to the Salesian community and the faithful of this parish of Saint Paul; they have welcomed us to their church, without hesitating to yield the place which is usually theirs in the liturgical assembly. I know that they are gathered in the field next door, and I hope, at the end of this Eucharist, to see them and give them my blessing, but even now I say to them: "Many thanks! May God raise up in you, and through you, many apostles modelled on your patron."

The decisive event in Paul's life was his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus: Christ appeared to him as a dazzling light, he spoke to him and he won him over. The Apostle saw the Risen Jesus; and in him he beheld the full stature of humanity. As a result Paul experienced an inversion of perspective; he now saw everything in the light of this perfect stature of humanity in Christ: what had earlier seemed essential and fundamental, he now considered nothing more than "refuse"; no longer "gain" but loss, for now the only thing that mattered was life in Christ (cf. *Phil* 3:7-8). Far from being merely a stage in Paul's personal growth, this was a death to himself and a resurrection in Christ: one form of life died in him, and a new form was born, with the Risen Christ.

My brothers and sisters, "let us make haste to know the Lord", the Risen One! As you know, Jesus, perfect man, is also our true God. In him, God became visible to our eyes, to give us a share in his divine life. With him a new dimension of being, of life, has come about, a dimension which integrates matter and through which a new world arises. But this qualitative leap in universal history which Jesus brought about in our place and for our sake – how is it communicated to human beings, how does it permeate their life and raise it on high? It comes to each of us through faith and Baptism. This sacrament is truly death and resurrection, transformation and new life, so much so that the baptized person can say together with Paul: "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (*Gal* 2:20). I live, but no longer

I. In a certain way, my identity has been taken away and made part of an even greater identity; I still have my personal identity, but now it is changed and open to others as a result of my becoming part of Another: in Christ I find myself living on a new plane. What then has happened to us? Paul gives us the answer: You have become one in Christ Jesus (cf. *Gal* 3:28).

Through this process of our "christification" by the working and grace of God's Spirit, the gestation of the Body of Christ in history is gradually being accomplished in us. At this moment I would like to go back in thought five centuries, to the years following 1506, when, in these lands, then visited by the Portuguese, the first sub-Saharan Christian kingdom was established, thanks to the faith and determination of the king, Dom Alphonsus I Mbemba-a-Nzinga, who reigned from 1506 until his death in 1543. The kingdom remained officially Catholic from the sixteenth century until the eighteenth, with its own ambassador in Rome. You see how two quite different ethnic groups – the Bantu and the Portuguese – were able to find in the Christian religion common ground for understanding, and committed themselves to ensuring that this understanding would be long-lasting, and that differences – which undoubtedly existed, and great ones at that – would not divide the two kingdoms! For Baptism enables all believers to be one in Christ.

Today it is up to you, brothers and sisters, following in the footsteps of those heroic and holy heralds of God, to offer the Risen Christ to your fellow citizens. So many of them are living in fear of spirits, of malign and threatening powers. In their bewilderment they end up even condemning street children and the elderly as alleged sorcerers. Who can go to them to proclaim that Christ has triumphed over death and all those occult powers (cf. *Eph* 1:19-23; 6:10-12)? Someone may object: "Why not leave them in peace? They have their truth, and we have ours. Let us all try to live in peace, leaving everyone as they are, so they can best be themselves." But if we are convinced

and have come to experience that without Christ life lacks something, that something real – indeed, the most real thing of all – is missing, we must also be convinced that we do no injustice to anyone if we present Christ to them and thus grant them the opportunity of finding their truest and most authentic selves, the joy of finding life. Indeed, we must do this. It is our duty to offer everyone this possibility of attaining eternal life.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us say to them, in the words of the Israelite people: "Come, let us return to the Lord; for he has torn, that he may heal us." Let us enable human poverty to encounter divine mercy. The Lord makes us his friends, he entrusts himself to us, he gives us his Body in the Eucharist, he entrusts his Church to us. And so we ought truly to be his friends, to be one in mind with him, to desire what he desires and to reject what he does not desire. Jesus himself said: "You are my friends if you do what I command you" (*Jn* 15:14). Let this, then, be our common commitment: together to do his holy will: "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation" (*Mk* 16:15). Let us embrace his will, like Saint Paul: "Preaching the Gospel ... is a necessity laid upon me; woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!" (*1 Cor* 9:16).

MEETING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER BENEDICT XVI

Stadio dos Coqueiros - Luanda
Saturday, 21 March 2009

Dear Friends,

You have come here in great numbers to be with the Successor of Peter, and you represent so many other young people who are one with us in spirit. You have come to join me in proclaiming openly the joy of our faith in Jesus Christ, and in renewing your commitment to be his faithful disciples in our time. A meeting much like this took place here in Luanda on 7 June 1992 with our beloved Pope John Paul II. Today another Pope stands before you: with a different appearance, but with the same love in his heart, and he embraces all of you in Jesus Christ, who is "the same yesterday, today and for ever" (*Heb* 13:8).

First of all I want to thank you for this celebration which you have planned for me, for the festive atmosphere which you yourselves generate, for your presence and for your joy. I cordially greet my brother Bishops and priests and all those who are engaged in youth ministry. I likewise greet with gratitude all who have prepared this event, especially the Bishops' Commission for Young People and Vocations, and its President, Bishop Kanda Almeida, whom I thank for his warm words of welcome. I greet all the young people present, Catholics and others, who are looking for an answer to their questions and difficulties. Some of these have been expressed by your representatives, and I have listened to them with gratitude and appreciation. The embrace I exchanged with them is, naturally, an embrace which I offer to all of you.

Meeting young people is good for everyone! You may have

your share of difficulties, but you are filled with great hope, great enthusiasm and a great desire to make a new beginning. My young friends, you hold within yourselves the power to shape the future. I encourage you to look to that future through the eyes of the Apostle John. Saint John tells us: "I saw a new Heaven and a new earth... and I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven, from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold the dwelling of God is with men'" (*Rev* 21:1-3).

Dear young people, God makes all the difference. His special presence among us begins with his easy intimacy with the first couple in the garden of Eden; it continues with the divine glory which shone forth from the Tent of Meeting in the midst of the People of Israel during their journey through the desert, and it culminates in the incarnation of the Son of God who became inseparably one with humanity in Jesus Christ. Jesus himself traversed the desert of our humanity and, passing beyond death, he rose from the dead and now draws all humanity with himself towards God. Jesus is no longer confined to a particular place and time. His Spirit, the Holy Spirit, flows forth from him, enters our hearts and thus joins us to him, and with him to the Father – to the God who is one and three.

Yes, my friends! God makes all the difference... and more! God changes us; he makes us new! This is what he has promised: "Behold, I make all things new" (*Rev* 21:5). It is true! The Apostle Paul tells us: "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled himself to us" (*2 Cor* 5:17-18). In ascending to Heaven and entering eternity, Jesus Christ has become the Lord of all ages. So he can walk with us as a friend in the present, carrying in his hand the book of our days. In his hand he also holds the past, the foundation and source of our life. He also carefully holds the future, allowing us to catch a glimpse of the most beautiful dawn we will ever see: the

dawn that radiates from him, the dawn of the Resurrection. God is the future of a new humanity, which is anticipated in his Church. When you have a chance, take time to read the Church's history. You will find that the Church does not grow old with the passing of the years. Rather, she grows younger, for she is journeying towards her Lord, day by day drawing nearer to the one true fountain overflowing with youthfulness, rebirth, the power of life.

Dear young people, the future is God. As we have just heard, "he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away" (*Rev* 21:4). At present though, and even in our midst, I see some of the many thousands of young Angolans who have been maimed or disabled as a result of the war and the landmines. I think of the countless tears that have been shed for the loss of your relatives and friends. It is not hard to imagine the dark clouds that still veil the horizon of your fondest hopes and dreams.

In your hearts I see doubt, a doubt which you have expressed to me today. You are saying: "Here is what we have. There is no visible sign of the things you are talking about! The promise is backed by God's word – and we believe it – but when will God arise and renew all things?" Jesus' answer is the one he gave to his disciples: "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many rooms; if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?" (*Jn* 14:1-2). But you persist, dear young people: "Yes! But when will this happen?" The Apostles asked Jesus a similar question, and his answer was: "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses... to the ends of the earth" (*Acts* 1:7-8). See how Jesus does not leave us without an answer; he tells us one thing very clearly: renewal starts from within; you will receive a power from on high. The power to shape the future

is within you.

It is within you, but how? Just as life exists within a seed. That is how Jesus explained it at a critical juncture in his ministry. The beginning of his ministry was accompanied by great enthusiasm. People saw the sick healed, demons cast out, the Gospel proclaimed, but otherwise the world had not changed: the Romans remained in power and everyday life continued to be hard, despite those miracles and those beautiful words. People's enthusiasm was waning so much that even some of his disciples had left the Master (cf. *Jn* 6:66) who preached but did not change the world. Everyone was asking: deep down, what value does this message have? What has this prophet of God brought us? It was then that Jesus spoke about the sower who sows in the field of the world, and he explained that the seed is his word (*Mk* 4:3-20) and his miracles of healing. These are so few in comparison to the immense needs and demands of everyday life. And yet, deep within the seed, the future is already present, since the seed contains tomorrow's bread, tomorrow's life. The seed seems almost nothing. But it is the presence of the future, the promise already present. When it falls on good soil, it produces fruit, thirty, sixty and even a hundredfold.

My dear friends, you are a seed which God has sown in the world, a seed that contains power from on high, the power of the Holy Spirit. And yet, the only way to pass from the promise of life to actually bearing fruit is to give your lives in love, to die for love. Jesus himself said: "Unless a grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life" (*Jn* 12:24-25). This is what Jesus said, and this is how he acted. His crucifixion seems like complete failure, but it is not! Jesus, in the power of "the eternal Spirit, offered himself without blemish to God" (*Heb* 9:14). Thus, once he fell to the earth, he could bear fruit in every time and place. In your midst you have the new Bread, the Bread of

future life, the Most Holy Eucharist, which nourishes us and pours out the life of the Trinity into the hearts of all people.

Dear young people, as seeds filled with the power of the same eternal Spirit, sprout up before the warmth of the Eucharist, in which the Lord's testament is fulfilled: he gives himself to us and we respond by giving ourselves to others, for love of him. This is the way that leads to life; it can be followed only by maintaining a constant dialogue with the Lord and among yourselves. The dominant societal culture is not helping you to live by Jesus' word or to practise the self-giving to which he calls you in accordance with the Father's plan. Yet, dear friends, you have the power within you, just as it was in Jesus when he said: "the Father who dwells in me does his works... he who believes in me, will also do the works that I do; and he will do greater works than these, because I go to the Father" (*Jn* 14:10,12). So do not be afraid to make definitive decisions. You do not lack generosity – that I know! But the idea of risking a lifelong commitment, whether in marriage or in a life of special consecration, can be daunting. You might think: "The world is in constant flux and life is full of possibilities. Can I make a life-long commitment now, without knowing what unforeseen events lie in store for me? By making a definitive decision, would I not be risking my freedom and tying my own hands?" These are the doubts you feel, and today's individualistic and hedonist culture aggravates them. Yet when young people avoid decisions, there is a risk of never attaining to full maturity!

I say to you: Take courage! Dare to make definitive decisions, because in reality these are the only decisions which do not destroy your freedom, but guide it in the right direction, enabling you to move forward and attain something worthwhile in life. There is no doubt about it: life is worthwhile only if you take courage and are ready for adventure, if you trust in the Lord who will never abandon you. Young people of Angola, unleash the power of the Holy Spirit within you, the power from on high! Trusting in this power, like Jesus, risk taking a

leap and making a definitive decision. Give life a chance! In this way islands, oases and great stretches of Christian culture will spring up in your midst, and bring to light that "holy city coming down out of Heaven, from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband". This is the life worthy of being lived, and I commend it to you from my heart. May God bless the young people of Angola!

EUCHARISTIC CELEBRATION WITH THE BISHOPS OF I.M.B.I.S.A. (INTER-REGIONAL MEETING OF BISHOPS OF SOUTHERN AFRICA)

HOMILY OF THE HOLY FATHER BENEDICT XVI

Cimangola Square in Luanda
Sunday, 22 March 2009

Dear Cardinals,
Brother Bishops and Priests,
Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

"God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (*Jn* 3:16). These words fill us with joy and hope, as we await the fulfilment of God's promises! Today it is my particular joy, as the Successor of the Apostle Peter, to celebrate this Mass with you, my brothers and sisters in Christ from throughout Angola, São Tomé and Príncipe, and so many other countries. With great affection in the Lord I greet the Catholic communities from Luanda, Bengo, Cabinda, Benguela, Huambo, Huìla, Kuàndo Kubàngo, Kunène, North Kwanza, South Kwanza, North Lunda, South Lunda, Malanje, Namibe, Moxico, Uíje and Zàire.

In a special way, I greet my brother Bishops, the members of the Inter-Regional Meeting of Bishops of Southern Africa, assembled around this altar of the Lord's sacrifice. I thank the President of CEAST, Archbishop Damião Franklin, for his kind words of welcome, and, in the person of their Pastors, I greet all the faithful in the nations of Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland

and Zimbabwe.

Today's first reading has a particular resonance for God's people in Angola. It is a message of hope addressed to the Chosen People in the land of their Exile, a summons to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the Lord's Temple. Its vivid description of the destruction and ruin caused by war echoes the personal experience of so many people in this country amid the terrible ravages of the civil war. How true it is that war can "destroy everything of value" (cf. *2 Chr* 36:19): families, whole communities, the fruit of men's labour, the hopes which guide and sustain their lives and work! This experience is all too familiar to Africa as a whole: the destructive power of civil strife, the descent into a maelstrom of hatred and revenge, the squandering of the efforts of generations of good people. When God's word – a word meant to build up individuals, communities and the whole human family – is neglected, and when God's law is "ridiculed, despised, laughed at" (*ibid.*, v. 16), the result can only be destruction and injustice: the abasement of our common humanity and the betrayal of our vocation to be sons and daughters of a merciful Father, brothers and sisters of his beloved Son.

So let us draw comfort from the consoling words which we have heard in the first reading! The call to return and rebuild God's Temple has a particular meaning for each of us. Saint Paul, the two thousandth anniversary of whose birth we celebrate this year, tells us that "we are the temple of the living God" (*2 Cor* 6:16). God dwells, we know, in the hearts of all who put their faith in Christ, who are reborn in Baptism and are made temples of the Holy Spirit. Even now, in the unity of the Body of Christ which is the Church, God is calling us to acknowledge the power of his presence within us, to reappropriate the gift of his love and forgiveness, and to become messengers of that merciful love within our families and communities, at school and in the workplace, in every sector of social and political life.

Here in Angola, this Sunday has been set aside as a day of prayer and sacrifice for national reconciliation. The Gospel teaches us that reconciliation, true reconciliation, can only be the fruit of conversion, a change of heart, a new way of thinking. It teaches us that only the power of God's love can change our hearts and make us triumph over the power of sin and division. When we were "dead through our sins" (*Eph* 2:5), his love and mercy brought us reconciliation and new life in Christ. This is the heart of the Apostle Paul's teaching, and it is important for us to remind ourselves: only God's grace can create a new heart in us! Only his love can change our "hearts of stone" (cf. *Ezek* 11:19) and enable us to build up, rather than tear down. Only God can make all things new!

It is to preach this message of forgiveness, hope and new life in Christ that I have come to Africa. Three days ago, in Yaoundé, I had the joy of promulgating the *Instrumentum Laboris* for the Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops, which will be devoted to the theme: *The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*. I ask you today, in union with all our brothers and sisters throughout Africa, to pray for this intention: that every Christian on this great continent will experience the healing touch of God's merciful love, and that the Church in Africa will become "for all, through the witness borne by its sons and daughters, a place of true reconciliation" (*Ecclesia in Africa*, 79).

Dear friends, this is the message that the Pope is bringing to you and your children. You have received power from the Holy Spirit to be the builders of a better tomorrow for your beloved country. In Baptism you were given the Spirit in order to be heralds of God's Kingdom of truth and life, of holiness and grace, of justice, love and peace (cf. *Roman Missal*, Preface of Christ the King). On the day of your Baptism you received the light of Christ. Be faithful to that gift! Be confident that the Gospel can affirm, purify and ennoble the profound human values present in your native culture and traditions:

your strong families, your deep religious sense, your joyful celebration of the gift of life, your appreciation of the wisdom of the elderly and the aspirations of the young. Be grateful, then, for the light of Christ! Be grateful for those who brought it, the generations of missionaries who contributed – and continue to contribute – so much to this country's human and spiritual development. Be grateful for the witness of so many Christian parents, teachers, catechists, priests and religious, who made personal sacrifices in order to pass this precious treasure down to you! And take up the challenge which this great legacy sets before you. Realize that the Church, in Angola and throughout Africa, is meant to be a sign before the world of that unity to which the whole human family is called, through faith in Christ the Redeemer.

The words which Jesus speaks in today's Gospel are quite striking: He tells us that God's sentence has already been pronounced upon this world (cf. *Jn* 3:19ff). The light has already come into the world. Yet men preferred the darkness to the light, because their deeds were evil. How much darkness there is in so many parts of our world! Tragically, the clouds of evil have also overshadowed Africa, including this beloved nation of Angola. We think of the evil of war, the murderous fruits of tribalism and ethnic rivalry, the greed which corrupts men's hearts, enslaves the poor, and robs future generations of the resources they need to create a more equitable and just society – a society truly and authentically African in its genius and values. And what of that insidious spirit of selfishness which closes individuals in upon themselves, breaks up families, and, by supplanting the great ideals of generosity and self-sacrifice, inevitably leads to hedonism, the escape into false utopias through drug use, sexual irresponsibility, the weakening of the marriage bond and the break-up of families, and the pressure to destroy innocent human life through abortion?

Yet the word of God is a word of unbounded hope. "God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son ... so that through him, the world might be saved" (*Jn* 3:16-17). God does not give up on us!

He continues to lift our eyes to a future of hope, and he promises us the strength to accomplish it. As Saint Paul tells us in today's second reading, God created us in Christ Jesus "to live the good life", a life of good deeds, in accordance with his will (cf. *Eph* 2:10). He gave us his commandments, not as a burden, but as a source of freedom: the freedom to become men and women of wisdom, teachers of justice and peace, people who believe in others and seek their authentic good. God created us to live in the light, and to be light for the world around us! This is what Jesus tells us in today's Gospel: "The man who lives by the truth comes out into the light, so that it may be plainly seen that what he does is done in God" (*Jn* 3:21).

"Live", then, "by the truth!" Radiate the light of faith, hope and love in your families and communities! Be witnesses of the holy truth that sets men and women free! You know from bitter experience that, in comparison with the sudden, destructive fury of evil, the work of rebuilding is painfully slow and arduous. Living by the truth takes time, effort and perseverance: it has to begin in our own hearts, in the small daily sacrifices required if we are to be faithful to God's law, in the little acts by which we demonstrate that we love our neighbours, all our neighbours, regardless of race, ethnicity or language, and by our readiness to work with them to build together on foundations that will endure. Let your parishes become communities where the light of God's truth and the power of Christ's reconciling love are not only celebrated, but proclaimed in concrete works of charity. And do not be afraid! Even if it means being a "sign of contradiction" (*Lk* 2:34) in the face of hardened attitudes and a mentality that sees others as a means to be used, rather than as brothers and sisters to be loved, cherished and helped along the path of freedom, life and hope.

Let me close by addressing a special word to the young people of Angola, and to all young people throughout Africa. Dear young friends: you are the hope of your country's future, the promise of a better tomorrow! Begin today to grow in your friendship with Jesus,

who is "the way, and the truth and the life" (*Jn* 14:6): a friendship nurtured and deepened by humble and persevering prayer. Seek his will for you by listening to his word daily, and by allowing his law to shape your lives and your relationships. In this way you will become wise and generous prophets of God's saving love. Become evangelizers of your own peers, leading them by your own example to an appreciation of the beauty and truth of the Gospel, and the hope of a future shaped by the values of God's Kingdom. The Church needs your witness! Do not be afraid to respond generously to God's call, whether it be to serve him as a priest or a religious, as a Christian parent, or in the many forms of service to others which the Church sets before you.

Dear brothers and sisters! At the end of today's first reading, Cyrus, King of Persia, inspired by God, calls the Chosen People to return to their beloved land and to rebuild the Temple of the Lord. May his words be a summons to all God's People in Angola and throughout Southern Africa: Arise! *Ponde-vos a caminho!*(cf. *2 Chr* 36:23) Look to the future with hope, trust in God's promises, and live in his truth. In this way, you will build something destined to endure, and leave to future generations a lasting inheritance of reconciliation, justice and peace. Amen.

MEETING WITH CATHOLIC MOVEMENTS FOR THE PROMOTION OF WOMEN

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER BENEDICT XVI

Parish of Saint Anthony in Luanda
Sunday, 22 March 2009

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

"They have no more wine," said Mary, begging Jesus to intervene so that the wedding-feast could continue, as was only right and fitting: "As long as the wedding guests have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast" (*Mk* 2:19). The Mother of Jesus turns to the servants and implores them: "Do whatever he tells you" (cf. *Jn* 2:1-5). Her maternal mediation thus made possible the "good wine", prefiguring a new covenant between divine omnipotence and the poor but receptive human heart. This, in fact, had already happened in the past when – as we heard in the first reading – "all the people answered together and said: 'all that the Lord has spoken, we will do'" (*Ex* 19:8).

These same words well up in the hearts of all gathered here today in Saint Anthony's Church: a building which we owe to the commendable missionary efforts of the Capuchin Friars Minor, who wanted to provide a new Tent for the Ark of the Covenant, the sign of God's presence among his pilgrim people. To them, to those who work alongside them, and to all who benefit from their spiritual and social assistance, the Pope imparts his blessing with warm words of encouragement. I greet with affection all those present: Bishops, priests, religious men and women, and particularly the lay faithful who consciously embrace the duties of Christian commitment and witness that flow from the Sacrament of Baptism and also – in the case of spouses – from the Sacrament of Marriage. Moreover, given the main

purpose of our gathering today, I extend greetings of great affection and hope to all women, to whom God has entrusted the wellsprings of life: I invite you to live and to put your trust in life, because the living God has put his trust in you! With gratitude in my heart I also greet the leaders and facilitators of ecclesial movements that have made the promotion of Angolan women a priority. I thank Archbishop José de Queirós Alves and your representatives for their kind words and for drawing attention to the aspirations and hopes of so many of the silent heroines among the women of this beloved nation.

I call everyone to an effective awareness of the adverse conditions to which many women have been – and continue to be – subjected, paying particular attention to ways in which the behaviour and attitudes of men, who at times show a lack of sensitivity and responsibility, may be to blame. This forms no part of God's plan. In the Scripture reading, we heard that the entire people cried out together: "all that the Lord has spoken, we will do!" Sacred Scripture tells us that the divine Creator, looking upon all he had made, saw that something was missing: everything would have been fine if man had not been alone! How could one man by himself constitute the image and likeness of God who is one and three, God who is communion? "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him" (*Gen* 2:18). God went to work again, fashioning for the man the helper he still lacked, and endowing this helper in a privileged way by incorporating the order of love, which had seemed under-represented in creation.

As you know, my dear friends, this order of love belongs to the intimate life of God himself, the Trinitarian life, the Holy Spirit being the personal *hypostasis* of love. As my predecessor Pope John Paul II once wrote, "in God's eternal plan, woman is the one in whom the order of love in the created world of persons takes first root" (*Mulieris Dignitatem,* 29). In fact, gazing upon the captivating charm that radiates from woman due to the inner grace God has given her,

the heart of man is enlightened and he sees himself reflected in her: "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (*Gen* 2:23). Woman is another "I" who shares in the same human nature. We must therefore recognize, affirm and defend the equal dignity of man and woman: they are both persons, utterly unique among all the living beings found in the world.

Man and woman are both called to live in profound communion through a reciprocal recognition of one another and the mutual gift of themselves, working together for the common good through the complementary aspects of masculinity and femininity. Who today can fail to recognize the need to make more room for the "reasons of the heart"? In a world like ours, dominated by technology, we feel the need for this feminine complementarity, so that the human race can live in the world without completely losing its humanity. Think of all the places afflicted by great poverty or devastated by war, and of all the tragic situations resulting from migrations, forced or otherwise. It is almost always women who manage to preserve human dignity, to defend the family and to protect cultural and religious values.

Dear brothers and sisters, history records almost exclusively the accomplishments of men, when in fact much of it is due to the determined, unrelenting and charitable action of women. Of all the many extraordinary women, allow me to mention two in particular: Teresa Gomes and Maria Bonino. The first, an Angolan, died in 2004 in the city of Sumbe after a happily married life in which she gave birth to seven children; she was a woman of unswerving Christian faith and exemplary apostolic zeal. This was particularly evident during the years 1975 and 1976 when fierce ideological and political propaganda invaded the parish of Our Lady of Grace of Porto Amboim, almost forcing the doors of the church to close. Teresa then became the leader of the faithful who refused to bend under pressure. Teresa offered support, courageously protecting the parish structures and trying every possible means to restore the celebration of Mass. Her love for the

Church made her indefatigable in the work of evangelization, under the direction of the priests.

Maria Bonino was an Italian paediatrician who offered her expertise as a volunteer in several missions throughout this beloved African continent. She became the head of the paediatric ward in the provincial hospital at *Uije* during the last two years of her life. Caring for the daily needs of thousands of children who were patients there, Maria paid the ultimate price for her service by sacrificing her life during the terrible epidemic of Marburg Haemorrhagic Fever, to which she herself succumbed. She was transferred to Luanda for treatment, but she died and was laid to rest here on 24 March 2005 – the day after tomorrow is her fourth anniversary. Church and society have been – and continue to be – enormously enriched by the presence and virtues of women, and in a particular way by consecrated religious who, relying on the Lord's grace, have placed themselves at the service of others.

Dear Angolans, since the dignity of women is equal to that of men, no one today should doubt that women have "a full right to become actively involved in all areas of public life, and this right must be affirmed and guaranteed, also, where necessary, through appropriate legislation. This acknowledgment of the public role of women should not however detract from their unique role within the family. Here their contribution to the welfare and progress of society, even if its importance is not sufficiently appreciated, is truly incalculable" (*Message for the 1995 World Day of Peace,* 9). Moreover, a woman's personal sense of dignity is not primarily the result of juridically defined rights, but rather the direct consequence of the material and spiritual care she receives in the bosom of the family. The presence of a mother within the family is so important for the stability and growth of this fundamental cell of society, that it should be recognized, commended and supported in every possible way. For the same reason, society must hold husbands and fathers accountable for their responsibilities

towards their families.

Dear families, you have undoubtedly noticed that no human couple, alone and on its own strength, can adequately offer children love and a genuine understanding of life. In fact, in order to say to someone, "your life is good even though you don't know what the future will bring", there needs to be a higher and more trustworthy authority than parents alone can offer. Christians know that this higher authority has been given to the larger family which God, through his Son Jesus Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit, has established within human history, namely the Church. We find at work here the eternal and indestructible love which guarantees to each of us that our life will always have meaning, even if we do not know what the future will bring. For this reason, the building up of every Christian family takes place within the larger family, the Church, which sustains the domestic family and holds it close to her heart, giving it the assurance that it is protected, now and in the future, by the "yes" of the Creator.

"They have no more wine" – Mary says to Jesus. Dear women of Angola, accept Mary as your advocate with the Lord. This is precisely how we see her at the wedding-feast of Cana: a tender woman, full of motherly care and courage, a woman who recognizes the needs of others and, wanting to help, places those needs before the Lord. If we stay close to her, we can all – men and women alike – recover that sense of serenity and deep trust that makes us feel blessed by God and undaunted in our struggle for life. May Our Lady of Muxima be the guiding star of your lives. May she keep all of you united in the great family of God. Amen.

MEETING WITH JOURNALISTS

DURING THE RETURN FLIGHT

WORDS OF THE HOLY FATHER BENEDICT XVI

Papal Flight
Monday, 23 March 2009

Dear Friends,

I see that you are still working. My work is almost complete, but yours is beginning again. Thank you for your diligence.

There are two impressions above all that have remained in my memory: on the one hand, the exuberant warmth, the joy of Africa in festive mood. It seems to me that they saw in the Pope, so to speak, the personification of the fact that we are all children of God, the family of God. This family really exists, and we, with all our limits, are part of it, and God is with us. Hence the presence of the Pope, so to speak, helped to create a sense of this, helped to create an atmosphere of real joy.

On the other hand, the spirit of recollection in the liturgies, the strong sense of the sacred, made a great impression on me: in the liturgies, the groups were not putting themselves forward, they were not drawing attention to themselves, but there was the presence of the sacred, of God himself: likewise in the way they moved, they were always respectful and conscious of the divine presence. This made a great impression on me.

I must say, too, that I was profoundly moved to learn that, on Friday evening amid the chaos at the entrance to the Stadium, two girls

died. I have prayed and I continue to pray for them. Unfortunately one of them has not yet been identified. Cardinal Bertone and Archbishop Filoni were able to visit the mother of the other, a courageous widowed lady with five children. The eldest of the five – who is now deceased – was a catechist. We all hope and pray that in the future things can be organized in such a way that this no longer happens.

Then two other memories have remained with me: a special remembrance – so much could be said – concerns the Cardinal Léger Centre: I was deeply touched to witness there so many forms of suffering – all the pain, the sadness, the poverty of human life – but also to witness how State and Church work together to assist the suffering. On the one hand, the State manages this great Centre in an exemplary manner, on the other hand, ecclesial movements and Church agencies add their own contribution in order to provide real assistance to these people. And I think it can be seen that in offering help to the suffering, people become more human, the world becomes more human. This is what remains etched on my memory.

Not only did we distribute the *Instrumentum Laboris* for the Synod, but we also worked for the Synod. On the evening of the feast of Saint Joseph, I had a meeting with all the members of the Council for the Synod – 12 Bishops – and each one spoke of the situation of his local Church. They spoke to me of their proposals and expectations, and from this a very rich picture emerged of the real situation of the Church in Africa: how the Church operates, how she suffers, what she does, what she hopes, what the problems are. I could say a great deal, for example about the Church in South Africa, which has had the experience of a difficult reconciliation, but has been substantially successful: the Church in South Africa is now assisting the efforts towards reconciliation in Burundi with her own experience, and she is seeking to do something similar, albeit amid very great difficulties, in Zimbabwe.

Finally I should like once again to thank all those who have contributed to the great success of this journey: we have seen all the preparations that went into it, how everyone worked together. I want to thank the State authorities, the civil authorities, those of the Church and all the individuals who helped out. It seems to me that the final word in this adventure must be a "thank you". Once again I thank all of you journalists, for the work that you have done and continue to do. Safe journey to all of you. Thank you!

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI TO YOUNG PEOPLE OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF MADRID (SPAIN), WHO HAD COME TO ROME TO RECEIVE THE WORLD YOUTH DAY CROSS

Paul VI Audience Hall
Monday, 6 April 2009

Dear Friends,

It gives me great joy to receive such a numerous group at this Audience. You came from Madrid and Spain to receive the Youth Day Cross that will travel through various cities until the World Youth Day in Madrid in 2011. I cordially greet Cardinal Antonio María Rouco Varela, Archbishop of Madrid, who is leading this pilgrimage; the General Coordinator of the Youth Day, his Auxiliary, Bishop César Augusto Franco Martínez and the other Bishops, priests and catechists who have wished to be here. I greet you with special affection, dear young people, who in carrying the Cross profess your faith in the One who loves you infinitely, the Lord Jesus, whose Paschal Mystery we shall be celebrating in these Holy Lands. As I said on another occasion, "Faith, in its own way, needs to see and to touch.

The encounter with the World Youth Day Cross, which is touched and carried, becomes an interior encounter with the One who died for us on the Cross. The encounter with the Cross awakens within young people the remembrance of the God who chose to become man and to suffer with us" (*Address to the Roman Curia for the exchange of Christmas Greetings*, 22 December 2008). I am glad to know that you will carry this cross that you have received in procession on Good Friday through the streets of Madrid so that it may be acclaimed and venerated.

I therefore encourage you to discover in the Cross the infinite

measure of Christ's love, so as to be able to say, like St Paul: "I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me (Gal 2: 20). Yes, dear young people, Christ gave himself for each one of you and loves you in a unique and personal way. Respond to Christ's love by lovingly offering him your life. In this way, the preparation for World Youth Day, on which you have started working with great hope and dedication, will be rewarded with the fruit that these Days claim to bear: the renewal and strengthening of the experience of encountering Christ who died and rose for us.
Follow in Christ's footsteps! He is your destination, your way and also your reward. In the theme you have chosen for the World Youth Day, the Apostle Paul invites you to go on your way "rooted and built up in Jesus Christ, firm in the faith" (cf. Col 2: 7).

Life is undoubtedly a journey. Yet it is not an uncertain journey without a precise destination; on the contrary, it leads to Christ, the goal of human life and history. On this journey you will succeed in encountering the One who, by giving up his life for love, opens to you the door to eternal life. I therefore ask you to educate yourselves in the faith that gives meaning to your life and to strengthen your convictions so that you may stand firm in the face of the difficulties of daily life. I also urge you, on your journey towards Christ, to attract your young friends, your fellow students and co-workers, in such a way that they too may know and profess him as the Lord of their life. In order to do this, let the power from on High that is within you, the Holy Spirit, express himself with his immense attraction. Young people today need to discover the new life that comes from God, to be satiated by the truth, whose source is Christ who died and has risen, which the Church received as a treasure for all men.

Dear young people, this period of preparation for the Day in Madrid is an extraordinary occasion also to experience the grace of belonging to the Church, the Body of Christ. World Youth Day reveals

the dynamism of the Church and her eternal youth. Whoever loves Christ loves the Church with the same passion because she enables us to live in a close relationship with the Lord. Therefore cultivate initiatives that enable young people to feel as though they are members of the Church in full communion with their Pastors and with the Successor of Peter. Pray as a community, opening the doors of your parishes, associations and movements so that all may feel at home in the Church, where they are loved with God's own love. Celebrate and live your faith with immense joy. This is the gift of the Spirit. Thus your heart and those of your friends will be prepared to celebrate the great festival which is the World Youth Day, and we shall all live a new epiphany of the Church's youth.

In these most beautiful days of Holy Week which we began yesterday, I encourage you to contemplate Christ in the mysteries of his Passion, death and Resurrection. In them you will find what surpasses any wisdom and knowledge: God's love manifested in Christ. Learn from him, who came "not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mk 10: 45). This is the style of Christ's love, marked with the sign of the glorious Cross on which Christ was raised up in sight of all, with open heart, so that the world might look and see, through his perfect humanity, the love that saves us. The Cross thus becomes the very sign of life, because on it Christ defeated sin and death through the total gift of himself. For this reason we must embrace and adore the Lord's Cross, make it our own, accept its weight like the Cyrene, to participate in the one reality that can redeem all humanity (cf. Col 1: 24). In Baptism you were marked with the Cross of Christ and you now belong to him totally. Become ever more worthy of him and never be ashamed of this supreme sign of love.

With this profoundly Christian attitude you will carry on with the work of preparation for the World Youth Day successfully and

productively. For, as St Paul says, we can do everything through the One who gives us strength (cf. Phil 4: 13) and in the Crucified Christ God's power and wisdom are manifested in us (cf. 1 Cor 1: 24). Let yourselves be imbued with this power and wisdom. Communicate it to others and, under the protection of the Most Holy Virgin Mary, prepare with dedication and joy for the World Youth Day that will make Madrid a place radiant with faith and life, where young people from across the world will celebrate Christ with enthusiasm.
Bring my affectionate greeting back to your families and to the friends and companions who were unable to come here today, whom I bless warmly.

Happy Easter! Thank you.

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI TO THE FRANCISCAN FAMILY TAKING PART IN THE INTERNATIONAL "CHAPTER OF MATS"

Courtyard of the Papal Summer Residence, Castel Gandolfo
Saturday, 18 April 2009

Dear Brothers and Sisters of the Franciscan Family,

I welcome you with great joy at this happy and historical event which has gathered you: the eighth centenary of the approval of the "Protorule" of St Francis by Pope Innocent III. Eight hundred years have passed and that dozen Friars has become a multitude, scattered across every part of the world and today here, is worthily represented by you. In the past few days you have been meeting in Assisi for what you have chosen to call the "Chapter of Mats", to recall your origins. And at the end of this extraordinary experience you have come together to see the "Lord Pope", as your Seraphic Founder would have said. I greet you all with affection: the Friars Minor of the Three Obediences, led by their respective Minister General, among whom I thank Fr José Rodríguez Carballo for his courteous words; the members of the Third Order, with their Minister General; the Franciscan women religious and the members of the Franciscan Secular Institutes; and, knowing that they are present in spirit, the Poor Clares who constitute the "Second Order". I am glad to welcome several Franciscan Bishops; and in particular I greet Bishop Domenico Sorrentino of Assisi who represents the Church of Assisi, the native region of Francis and Clare and, spiritually, of all Franciscans.

We know how important for Francis was his relationship with Guido, the Bishop of Assisi in that period, who recognized his charism and supported him. It was Guido who introduced Francis to Cardinal Giovanni di San Paolo who then presented him to the Pope,

encouraging the approval of the Rule. Charism and Institution are always complementary elements for building the Church.

What can I say to you, dear friends? First of all I would like to join you in thanking God for the long way he has granted you to come, filling you with his benefits. And as Pastor of the whole Church I want to thank him for the precious gift that you yourselves are for the Christian people in its entirety. The tiny stream that flowed from Mount Subasio has become a great river that has made a remarkable contribution to spreading the Gospel throughout the world. Everything began with the conversion of Francis who, after the example of Jesus, "emptied himself" (cf. Phil 2: 7), and, by espousing Our Lady Poverty, became a witness and herald of the Father who is in Heaven. Certain words that the Apostle Paul applies to himself and which I like to recall in this Pauline Year may be appropriately applied to the *Poverello:* "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal 2: 20). And further, "Henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus" (Gal 6: 17).

These texts from the Letter to the Galatians apply literally to the figure of St Francis. Francis follows perfectly in Paul's footsteps and one can truly say with him: "For to me to live is Christ" (Phil 1: 21). He experienced the power of divine grace and he is as it were dead and risen. All the riches he previously owned, every cause for vanity and security, all this became "loss" from the moment of his encounter with the Crucified and Risen Christ (cf. Phil 3: 7-11). At that point, leaving everything almost becomes necessary, in order to express the super-abundance of the gift received which is so great that it demands total self-emptying, which however does not suffice; it needs a whole life lived "in accordance with the form of the Holy Gospel (2 *Test.*, 4: *Fonti Francescane,* 116).

And here we come to the point that certainly lies at the heart of our meeting. I shall sum it up like this: *the Gospel as a rule of life.* "The Rule and the Life of the Friars Minor is this, that is, to observe the Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ". This is what Francis wrote at the beginning of his *Regula bullata* (*Rb* I, 1: *FF,* 75). He understood himself entirely in the light of the Gospel. This is his fascination. This is his perennial timeliness. Thomas of Celano says that the *Poverello* "always carried Jesus in his heart. Jesus on his lips, Jesus is his ears, Jesus in his eyes, Jesus in his hands, Jesus in all his other members.... Indeed, finding himself frequently travelling and meditating on or praising Jesus, he would forget that he was on a journey and he would stop and invite all creatures to praise Jesus" (1 *Cel.,* II, 9, 115: *FF,* 115). Thus the *Poverello* became a living Gospel, capable of attracting to Christ men and women of every epoch, especially young people who prefer radicalism to half measures. Bishop Guido of Assisi and, later, Pope Innocent III recognized the evangelical authenticity of the proposal of Francis and his companions and they were able to encourage their commitment, also in view of the good of the universal Church.

Here a reflection springs spontaneously to mind: Francis might also *not* have gone to the Pope. Many religious groups and movements were forming at that time and some of them were opposed to the Church as an institution or at least did not seek her approval. A polemical attitude to the hierarchy would undoubtedly have gained Francis many followers. Instead, he immediately thought of putting his journey and that of his companions in the hands of the Bishop of Rome, the Successor of Peter. This act reveals his authentic ecclesial spirit. From the very first he had conceived of the little "we", which had begun with his first friars, as being within the great "we" of the Church, one and universal. And the Pope recognized and appreciated this. Indeed, the Pope for his part might *not* have given his approval to Francis' life project either. In fact we can easily imagine that some of Innocent III's collaborators might have advised him not to approve it,

perhaps fearing precisely that that little group of friars might resemble other heretical and pauperist cliques of the time. On the contrary, the Roman Pontiff, well informed by the Bishop of Assisi and by Cardinal Giovanni di San Paolo, was able to discern in it the initiative of the Holy Spirit and accepted, blessed and encouraged the nascent community of "friars minor".

Dear brothers and sisters, eight centuries have passed and you have desired to renew the gesture of your Founder. All of you are children and heirs of those origins. From that "good seed" which was Francis, conformed in his turn to the "grain of wheat" which is the Lord Jesus, who died and was raised to bear much fruit (cf. Jn 12: 24). The Saints propose anew the fruitfulness of Christ. Like Francis and Clare of Assisi, you too strive to follow this same logic always: to lose your life in the cause of Jesus and the Gospel, in order to save it and make it abundantly fruitful. While you praise and thank the Lord who has called you to belong to such a large and beautiful "family", continue to be attentive to what the Spirit says to it today, to each of its components, so that you may continue to proclaim the Kingdom of God fervently, treading in the footsteps of the Seraphic Father. May every brother and every sister always preserve a contemplative, simple and joyful heart: always set out anew from Christ, just as Francis set out from the gaze of the Crucifix of San Damiano and from the meeting with the leper, in order to see Christ's Face in the suffering brethren and bring his peace to all. May you be witnesses of God's "beauty", which Francis was able to praise while contemplating the marvels of Creation, and which made him exclaim to the Most High "You are beauty!" (*Lodi di Dio altissimo,* 4,6: *FF,* 261).

Dear friends, the last word I wish to leave you with is the same word that the Risen Jesus consigned to his disciples: "Go!" (cf. Mt 28: 19); Mk 16: 15). Go, and continue to "repair the house" of the Lord Jesus Christ, his Church. A few days ago the earthquake that struck the Abruzzo seriously damaged many churches and you of Assisi know

well what this means. But there is another "ruin" which is far more serious: that of people and communities! Like Francis, always begin with yourselves. We are the first house that God wants to restore. If you are always able to renew yourselves in the spirit of the Gospel you will continue to help the Pastors of the Church to make her face as Christ's Bride ever more beautiful. This is what the Pope expects of you, today, as at the outset. Thank you for coming! Go now and take the peace and love of Jesus Christ the Saviour to all. May Mary Immaculate, "the Virgin made Church" (cf. *Greeting to the Blessed Virgin Mary,* 1: *FF,* 259), always go with you. And may the Apostolic Blessing which I warmly impart to all of you present here and to the entire Franciscan Family sustain you always.

The Pope then greeted those present in various languages. To the English-speaking Franciscans he said:

I am pleased to welcome in a special way the Minister Generals gathered with the priests, Sisters and Brothers of the world-wide Franciscan community present at this Audience. As you mark the Eighth-hundredth Anniversary of the approval of the Rule of St Francis, I pray that through the intercession of the *Poverello* Franciscans everywhere will continue to offer themselves completely at the service of others, especially the poor. May the Lord bless you in your Apostolates and shower your communities with abundant vocations.

QUDDIESA TAL-INSEDJAMENT TA' PRESIDENT ĠDID

Omelija ta' Mons. Arċisqof Pawl Cremona O.P.

Il-valuri għal soċjetà aħjar

Eċċellenza, President ta' Malta u Sinjura Fenech Adami,

Jiena nixtieq nuri l-apprezzament tiegħi li l-ġuranta importanti ta' llum, l-insedjament ta' President ġdid għal pajjiżna, se tiġi mmarkata wkoll b'Quddiesa. Din trid turi tradizzjoni nisranija f'pajjiżna, iżda turi wkoll għażla li dan il-Jum ikun imsaħħah bil-fidi ta' dawk li jemmnu li Quddiesa, il-preżenza ta' Alla fostna, hija ta' ġid kbir għall-poplu tagħna.

Xtaqt li naqsam magħkom riflessjoni fuq il-valur li min jemmen ikun irid li joħroġ minn din l-għażla biex issir din il-Quddiesa. Tista' tgħin ukoll lil min ma jemminx biex jidħol aktar fil-fond fil-valur ta' din iċ-ċelebrazzjoni.

L-ewwel ħaġa ovvja hija li l-Quddiesa trid tkun talba għall-għajnuna mingħand Alla l-Imbierek. Min jemmen f'Alla jaf li l-għajnuna ta' Alla se tgħinu. F'Sidna Ġesù Kristu, aħna nafu li Alla tagħna huwa Alla li jinteressa ruħu minna, li jidħol fl-istorja tagħna biex jgħinna ngħixuha fit-toqol ta' din il-ħajja umana tagħna. Ħajja nisranija vera ma tillimitax ruħha li ddaħħal lil Alla biss fiċ-ċelebrazzjonijiet prinċipali tal-ħajja – twelid, żwieġ u mewt: hija ftit wisq. Ħajja nisranija vera tidħol f'mixja li tħalli lil Alla jidħol f'kull mument tal-ħajja biex idawwalha bil-preżenza, l-għajnuna u l-kelma tiegħu. Ħajja nisranija vera tfisser impenn mingħand Alla lejna, iżda wkoll impenn minn dawk li jkunu għażlu li jagħmlu din il-mixja. Il-Quddiesa ta' llum hija talba tagħna lkoll biex Alla l-Imbierek jgħin

lilna lkoll, iżda b'mod speċjali l-Eċċellenza Tiegħu, il-President-Elett, fil-bidi ta' dan il-mandat. Il-Knisja, flimkien ma' dawk kollha li jemmnu, huma magħqudin miegħu f'dan it-talb.

Dimensjoni ta' misteru

Din il-Quddiesa tagħmel sens biss lil min jirrikonoxxi li hemm dimensjoni ta' misteru fil-ħajja tal-bnedmin li tmur lilhinn minn dak li jidher.

L-ewwel dimensjoni hija dik tad-**Divinità** stess. Id-dinja li ngħixu, għal min jemmen, ma tistax tinfired mill-Ħallieq li għamilha. Dan għaliex twemmin f'Ħallieq li ħalaq id-dinja, iżda mbagħad li jinfired totalment minnha, ma jagħmilx sens. Alla l-Imbierek qiegħed lill-bniedem xbieha tiegħu, biex imexxi l-art, anki f'din id-dimensjoni: li jagħti lill-ħolqien dimensjoni divina taħt ir-realtà materjali.

Min jemmen jagħti dimensjoni divina lill-għemejjel tiegħu. Hu jkun jaf li l-libertà li għandu u l-għemejjel li joħorġu minnha, irid jgħixhom fid-dawl tal-għażla fundamentali tiegħu quddiem Alla. Din tgħodd bl-istess mod għal min il-libertà tiegħu jgħixha fid-dawl tal-għażla fundamentali tiegħu li Alla ma jeżistix. L-għażla trid issir: ma tagħmilx sens li tgħid li temmen li Alla jeżisti iżda taġixxi qiesu ma jeżistix. Din il-Quddiesa hija stqarrija li dawk li huma nsara jagħrfu li lilhinn minn dak li jkun jaqbel materjalment, huma jkunu qed jistqarru li l-għemejjel tagħhom qed jagħmluhom quddiem Alla, b'kuxjenza ta' responsabbiltà anki quddiemu.

Min jemmen, jagħti dimensjoni ta' **Eternità** lill-għemejjel tiegħu. L-iktar konklużjoni ovvja ta' din il-fidi hija li jemmen li l-ħajja ma tingħalaqx fil-mewt, iżda tiftaħ għall-ħajja ta' dejjem. Iżda dan ifisser ukoll li ma jistax jingħalaq fil-preżent biss, iżda jrid jgħaqqdu wkoll mal-Assolut li jisboq iż-żmien u huwa stabbli quddiem Alla.

Żgur li meta Alla ħalaq id-dinja kellu pjan għaliha u għall-bnedmin. Ma jistax min jemmen jagħmel li l-mument preżenti jsir l-assolut, u l-assolut ta' Alla jagħmlu relattiv. F'dan il-mument ikun qed jiċħad l-istess Eternità tal-ħsieb tal-Mulej.

Min jemmen jagħti dimensjoni ta' **Infinità** lill-ħsieb tiegħu, u b'mod speċjali lill-ħajja tiegħu stess u lill-għemejjel tiegħu. L-iktar ħaġa ovvja għan-nisrani hija li jgħix l-infinit billi ma jingħalaqx fl-ispazju ristrett tiegħu biss. L-għemejjel tiegħu jibdew mill-ispazju proprju u ristrett tiegħu biex jinkludu l-bnedmin kollha, l-umanità kollha. L-infinità fit-twemmin ma tippermetti l-ebda għeluq fl-imħabba u fl-interess lejn l-oħrajn. Il-Presidenza b'mod speċjali hija s-sinjali li jidher ta' din l-infinità, li tibda mill-għaqda tal-pajjiż, iżda li tkun miftuħa mingħajr egoiżmi għal spazju mingħajr limiti jew konfini fl-umanità.

F'Sidna Ġesù Kristu, l-Assolut, l-Etern u l-Infinit, jieħdu importanza temporali meta intwerew f'Sidna Ġesù Kristu taħt forma ta' Bniedem dgħajjef, iżda li jaqdi l-Assolut ta' Alla. Kien meħtieġ li jiġi fostna u jgħix dawn il-valuri fir-realtà diffiċli tagħna biex inkunu nafu kif ngħixuhom aħna.

Ġesù ġie biex iwassal il-valur tal-**Assolut** fil-Verità li hu ġie biex ixandar. Minħabba din il-Verità huwa spiċċa fuq is-Salib, iżda l-Verità li hu xandar għadha fostna sa llum. In-nisrani jrid jara liema huma dawk il-valuri, li n-nuqqas tagħhom qegħdin jikkawżaw tant tbatijiet fil-pajjiż tagħna, b'mod speċjali fil-familji u fost iż-żgħażagħ tagħna. B'xi mod irridu nimlew il-vojt spiritwali li qiegħed jaħkem lil ħafna minn ħutna, li jtellifhom id-dinjità tagħhom meta jippruvaw jimlewh bi ħwejjeġ oħra: b'alko]ol, sess bla responsabbiltà li jħalli warajh ħafna tbatija fil-persuni li jiġu mweġġgħin u fl-ulied li jitwieldu minnu, drogi, u logħob.

Ġesù ġie biex iwassal il-valur tal-**Eternità** li tinsab moħbija f'kull bniedem li ġie maħluq xbieha ta' Alla. Kull nisrani jrid jara l-valur ta' kull bniedem f'dan id-dawl. Ġesù ġie biex jgħinna naraw dan il-valur etern ta' kull persuna fil-persuni li, fl-aspett estern biss tagħhom, diffiċli li taraha. Huwa għaqqad l-eternità tiegħu ma' l-iktar dgħajfin billi identifika lilu nnifsu ma' dawk li huma fil-ħabs, jew bil-ġuħ, jew għerja jew morda jew barranin. Wara din l-istqarrija n-nisrani ma jistax jagħżel lil min jagħti d-dinjità u lil min jiċħadha: mill-bidu tal-ħajja, fil-kundizzjonijiet differenti tal-ħajja li wieħed jista' jinsab fihom, għall-aħħar mumenti tal-ħajja tiegħu.

Quddiem l-**Infinità** Ġesù ġie biex jgħallimna li l-ispazju fejn aħna qegħdin jew li aħna parti minnu, qatt ma għandu jkun limitazzjoni li tifridna mill-oħrajn. Ġesù fittex li jiftaħ l-orizzonti tal-Lhud għal realitajiet ta' popli oħra u jagħmlu miftuħ għal kulħadd. Huwa fejjaq il-firdiet li kien hemm bejn id-dixxipli tiegħu u bagħathom fid-dinja kollha. In-nisrani jfittex li jfejjaq dak li hemm f'qalbu li jillimitalu l-possibbiltà li jagħmlu Poplu wieħed biex ikun iktar miftuħ għall-bnedmin kollha.

Din hija sfida ikbar illum f'dinja globalizzata fejn irridu ngħixu u naħdmu qrib popli oħra, u hija sfida li qegħdin niffaċċjaw f'pajjiżna meta ħafna nies qegħdin ifittxu kenn f'pajjiżna minħabba s-sitwazzjoni diffiċli f'pajjiżhom. Anki s-soluzzjonijiet li politikament qegħdin infittxu, in-nisrani ma jista' qatt jifridhom minn din il-qalb miftuħa għall-implikazzjonijiet tal-Infinità tal-Imħabba ta' Alla li tasal sa kull bniedem.

Programm sħiħ

Huwa programm sħiħ li din il-Quddiesa qed tfakkarna fih illum. Huma valuri li jridu jwassluna biex ikollna soċjetà aħjar. Illum, nixtieq li nirringrazzja, f'isem il-Poplu tagħna, lill-Eċċellenza Tiegħu

l-President Dr. Edward Fenech Adami għas-servizz li huwa ta b'tant fedeltà lill-Poplu Malti. Eċċellenza President-Elett Dr. George Abela aħna nemmnu li l-Mulej qiegħed jafdalek f'idejk biex tfakkarna f'dawn il-valuri u tmexxina minnhom. Fil-Vanġelu llum smajna li jenħtieġ li xi ħadd joffri lilu nnifsu għall-kotra, imut għall-kotra biex hija tgħix. Grazzi talli aċċettajt li dan il-perijodu f'ħajtek tagħtih għall-ġid tagħna lkoll, biex il-Poplu tagħna lkoll jistagħna minnu.

KonKatidral ta' San Ġwann
04 ta' April 2009

OMELIJA TA' MONS. ARĊISQOF PAWL CREMONA O.P. FL-OKKAŻJONI TAR-RABA ANNIVERSARJU TAL-PONTIFIKAT TAL-PAPA BENEDITTU XVI

It-triq tal-imħabba u l-għaqda

Iltqajna biex infakkru r-raba anniversarju tal-ħatra tal-Papa Benedittu XVI biex imexxi l-Knisja ta' Sidna Ġesù Kristu.

F'dan il-jum jiġuna ħafna sentimenti.

L-ewwel li nirringrazzjaw lil Alla hu għad-don tal-Papat fil-Knisja. Alla kien jaf li bħala bnedmin tana l-Kelma, imma kien hemm bżonn ukoll li jkun hemm element ta' għaqda li permezz tagħha l-Knisja tibqa' waħda. Allura, mill-bidunett, meta waqqaf il-Knisja, huwa poġġa lil Pietru bħala sinjal ta' għaqda. U llum irridu nibdew billi nirringrazzjaw lill-Mulej proprju għall-għerf infinit tiegħu li tana l-Papat li għal elfejn sena sħaħ, il-Knisja, li għaddiet minn bosta esperjenzi differenti, illum tippreżenta lilha nfisha bħala Knisja waħda, qaddisa u appostolika – anke għad-don kbir tal-Papat.

Tagħlim kbir

It-tieni sentiment li jiġi f'qalbna huwa, ovvjament, li nirringrazzjaw lil Alla l-Imbierek talli għoġbu jagħżel lill-Papa Benedittu XVI biex imexxi l-Knisja f'dawn iż-żminijiet. Nixtieq nirringrazzja lill-Mulej għat-tagħlim kbir fuq ħafna suġġetti li l-Papa ta lill-Knisja u permezz tal-Knisja, f'xi suġġetti minnhom, ta d-dawl anke lill-bnedmin kollha. Qiegħed nitkellem dwar it-tagħlim tiegħu dwar il-Knisja biex tikber fil-Mulej – dak ikun indirizzat għall-membri tal-Knisja. Imma qiegħed nitkellem ukoll fuq id-duttrina tiegħu soċjali li permezz tagħha l-bnedmin fid-dinja kollha jistgħu jirriflettu minn

dawl ġdid u differenti biex jagħmlu l-għażliet tagħhom.

Nixtieq ukoll nirringrazzja lil Alla l-Imbierek għal dawn il-vjaġġi twal u tqal li l-Papa Benedittu XVI, li issa għandu 82 sena, niżżuħajr lil Alla qed jagħmel. Qed nitkellem, per eżempju, fuq il-vjaġġ li għamel is-sena l-oħra ġewwa l-Awstralja flimkien maż-żgħażagħ - jiena nzertajt kont hemm. Hemmhekk, il-Papa, bniedem f'dik l-età, kien element ta' ħafna ħeġġa u enerġija għaż-żgħażagħ. Il-kelma tiegħu setgħet tħeġġiġhom, għax ġejja minn qalb mimlija bi Kristu. Insemmi wkoll il-vjaġġ li għamel dan l-aħħar ġewwa l-Afrika, fejn huwa indirizza ħafna problemi fl-Afrika – problemi soċjali u umanitarji. U ovvjament, quddiem dinja li mhux dejjem hija ġusta - hemm differenza kbira bejn kontinenti sinjuri u kontinenti fqar - indirizza wkoll din il-problema.

Is-Sinodu tal-Isqfijiet

Imma llum, b'mod speċjali, jiena xtaqt li naqsam magħkom l-esperjenza – allura tkun esperjenza personali - tas-Sinodu tal-Isqfijiet li sar f'Ottubru li għadda f'Ruma.

Kien Sinodu li kellu jittratta l-Kelma ta' Alla. Kien hemm 270 isqof mid-dinja kollha. Hemmhekk, il-Kelma ta' Alla ġiet fil-wiċċ. Kien xahar li, biex ngħid hekk, kien l-iktar mument fil-ħajja tiegħi li kont qrib ta' Papa u kont qrib il-Papa Benedittu XVI.

Ngħaddi għal ftit ħsibijiet.

L-ewwelnett, il-Papa kien preżenti għal kważi s-sessjonijiet kollha, ħlief meta kien ikollu xi udjenza. Xi tfisser din? Għalija kien ifisser ir-rispett li l-Papa kellu li jisma' l-isqfijiet jagħmlu l-interventi tagħhom. Bniedem li ma jkunx umli jgħidlek li jkun biżżejjed li jaqra x'intqal wara; jaqra bil-mod il-mod x'ikunu qalu. Il-Papa ried ikun

preżenti bl-attenzjoni kollha; jikteb in-noti fi kważi s-sessjonijiet kollha. Kien jolqtok ukoll il-mod kif hu kien ikun verament rilassat ma' dawk l-isqfijiet kollha. Per eżempju qabel kien jgħid it-talba fil-bidu u wara dik tal-għeluq, kien jawguralna l-jum it-tajjeb u l-lejl it-tajjeb. Uriena wkoll u ħassejna li aħna qegħdin hemmhekk verament f'unjoni biex inservu l-Kelma.

It-tieni ħaġa li verament impressjonatna hija li l-Papa tkellem darba waħda. Talab il-kelma, mhux tkellem għax impona. Meta kien se jitkellem hu, ovvjament l-isqfijiet kollha bdejna nċapċpu. Iżda hu beda jgħidilna 'le', u li m'hemmx għalfejn. Imbagħad beda d-diskors tiegħu billi qalilna hekk: 'Issa mhux il-Papa Benedittu XVI se jitkellem, imma Joseph Ratzinger'. Ir-raġuni kienet biex jurina li f'dak il-mument ma kienx qed jitkellem mill-katedra, imma kien qed jitkellem bħala wieħed mill-isqfijiet, biex aħna ma nibżgħux quddiem il-kelma tiegħu.

It-tielet ħaġa li mpressjonatni fil-laqgħat tas-Sinodu kienet li, fid-darba li tkellem, il-Papa semma ħaġa li hija għal qalbu u li jsemmiha wkoll fil-ktieb 'Gesù di Nazareth'. Il-Papa jgħid - b'mod speċjali lill-istudjużi - li l-Kelma ta' Alla, il-Ktieb ta' Alla, 'tqisuhx biss bħala xi ħaġa letterarja' jew nippruvaw nikkundizzjonawh għall-istudju biex ngħid hekk uman tagħna, li huwa importanti wkoll. 'Imma aqrawh b'sens spiritwali, ħalli tifhmu li min kitbu, kitbu taħt l-ispirazzjoni ta' Alla l-Imbierek biex intom tgħinu l-bnedmin jiskopru x'ried jgħidilna Alla l-Imbierek u li hemm moħbi taħt it-test'. Laqtitni enormi l-imħabba kbira li l-Papa Benedittu XVI wera f'dan is-Sinodu lejn il-Kelma ta' Alla; wera li huwa jikkunsiudra lilu nnifsu bħala l-qaddej tal-Kelma ta' Alla.

Minn fomm il-Papa

Meta jiena ħsibt fuq xiex għandna nitkellmu llum, fl-

anniversarju tal-Papa, kelli quddiemi żewġ għażliet: jew nitkellem fuq il-ħajja tal-Papa Benedittu XVI – imma għidt li dik insibuha kullimkien u taqraha wkoll fil-gazzetti – jew inħalli l-Papa Benedittu XVI imexxina hu bi kliemu dwar il-Kelma li tatna l-Liturġija f'din il-ġurnata (Atti 3, 32-35; 1 Ġw 5, 1-6; Ġw 20, 19-31). Naħseb li kieku kelli nistaqsih x'jixtieq il-Papa kien iwieġeb: 'Li jien inkun dak li ngħinkom tifhmu l-Kelma'. Allura li se nagħmel hu proprju dan: il-Liturġija ta' llum se jfehemhielna l-Papa permezz ta' siltiet tiegħu li jiena għażilt.

Fil-Vanġelu ta' llum qrajna dwar laqgħa personali tal-appostli ma' Sidna Ġesù Kristu. Mingħajrha ma kienux jistgħu jkunu xhieda tal-Mulej. Biex ikunu xhieda tal-Mulej kellhom l-ewwel ikollhom l-esperjenza tal-Misteru tal-Għid: Kristu li qam u li wrihom il-marki tal-passjoni tiegħu. Ma tistax tkun xhud tal-Mulej Ġesù jekk dan il-misteru ma jkunx fiċ-ċentru tal-ħajja tiegħek. Tahom l-Ispirtu s-Santu u mbagħad, bħala konsegwenza loġika, qallhom: 'Jien nibgħatkom'. Ma tistax tirċievi l-Ispirtu s-Santu għalik biss, għax l-Ispirtu s-Santu huwa għotja.

Niġi issa għal dak li kiteb il-Papa Benedittu fil-Vġili tat-Talb maż-żgħażagħ, tat-12 ta' Settembru 2008. Il-Papa qal hekk, liż-żgħażagħ u lilna: 'Intelaq fl-Ispirtu s-Santu, biex issib lil Kristu. L-Ispirtu huwa l-gwida indispensabbli fit-talb. Huwa janima t-tama. Hu l-għajn tal-ferħ veru. L-Ispirtu s-Santu jagħtikom il-qawwa li tersqu lejn il-Misteru ta' Alla u jgħinkom tifhmu min hu Alla. Meta jirrivela min hu l-Mulej imsallab u li qam, huwa jimbuttakom biex tagħti xhieda għal Kristu. Illejla nħalli f'idejkom is-salib ta' Kristu. Kif esprimieh San Pawl ngħid għalija: ma jkun qatt li niftaħar jekk mhux bis-salib ta' Sidna Ġesù Kristu li bih id-dinja msallba għalija u jien għad-dinja'.

Imħabba

Fit-Tieni Lezzjoni ta' llum kellna lil San Ġwann jikteb lill-insara ta' żmienu fl-Ewwel Ittra tiegħu u jgħidilna li dak li se jsalva lilna u d-dinja hija l-fidi. Il-fidi tfisser, l-ewwelnett, esperjenza ta' mħabba li biha tibda tara d-dinja ta' madwarek b'għajnejn ta' mħabba. Mhux ta' b'xejn il-Papa tkellem kontra kull diskriminazzjoni, għax dak mhux in-nuċċali ta' Alla l-Imbierek! Fl-omelija tiegħu fl-Ewwel Għasar tal-ftuħ tas-Sena Pawlina, fit-28 ta' Ġunju 2008, il-Papa qal: 'Il-ħajja li issa ngħix fil-ġisem qed ngħixha bil-fidi fl-Iben ta' Alla li ħabbna u ta lilu nnifsu għalija. L-għemejjel kollha ta' Pawlu jibdew minn dan bħala ċentru. Il-fidi tiegħu hija l-esperjenza li hu maħbub minn Ġesù Kristu b'mod personali ħafna. Il-fidi tiegħu hija l-impatt tal-imħabba ta' Alla f'qalbu. Hekk, l-istess fidi kienet imħabba għal Ġesù Kristu'.

Għaqda

L-Ewwel Lezzjoni ta' llum, mill-Atti tal-Appostli kienet titkellem fuq l-ewwel komunità tal-insara; kif kienu magħqudin flimkien. Il-kliem li smajna huma: 'qalb waħda u ruħ waħda'. Forsi hija l-ikbar sfida għall-Knisja għaliex hemm l-uman – hemm l-uman li ma jaqbilx ma' xulxin. L-ikbar sfida hija li nippruvaw nikkupjaw l-għaqda li kien hemm fl-ewwel komunità nisranija biex inkunu xhieda. F'omelija fl-Għasar fil-Konverżjoni ta' San Pawl 2009, li kienet ukoll l-għeluq tal-Ġimgħa ta' Talb għall-Għaqda tal-Insara, il-Papa qal: ' Huwa biss fiċ-ċaħda tagħna nfusna, f'din il-konformità ma' Kristu, li nistgħu ningħaqdu bejnietna...'

Il-Papa qed jgħidilna li l-għaqda trid tkun lejn Kristu u lejn il-persuna l-oħra. Ikompli l-Papa: '...Li nsiru wieħed fi Kristu. Hija l-komunjoni ma' Kristu Rxoxt li ġġibilna l-għaqda. L-għaqda li Alla jagħti l-Knisja tiegħu u li għaliha nitolbu hija naturalment komunjoni

fis-sens spiritwali tal-kelma, fil-fidi u l-karità.

Aħna fil-Kelma ta' Alla nsibu li aħna l-glorja ta' Alla. Mhux nagħtu glorja lil Alla: aħna l-glorja tiegħu. Nista' ngħid li l-ikbar glorja li nistgħu nagħtu lill-Papa Benedittu XVI hija li nagħtu każ tal-kelma li jgħid u nippruvaw ngħixuha? Hekk inkunu verament anke l-glorja tal-Papat tal-Papa Benedittu XVI

KonKattidral ta' San Ġwann
19 ta' April 2009

MESSAĠĠ TA' MONS. ARĊISQOF PAWL CREMONA O.P.

F'SEMINAR GĦALL-MEMBRI TAL-KUNSILLI PASTORALI PARROKKJALI

Ix-xhieda tal-komunita' parrokkjali

Il-parroċċa hija żewġ realtajiet importanti, li waħda ma tistax toqgħod mingħajr l-oħra. L-ewwelnett, hija komunità nisranija ta' dawk il-persuni li qegħdin fil-Knisja, għamlu l-għażliet tagħhom u jridu jiffurmaw għaqda bejniethom, komunjoni bejniethom. It-tieni realtà hija li l-parroċċa hija territorju li din il-komunità trid tevanġelizza. Jekk il-komunità trid tevanġelizza, ovvjament qed nifhmu l-komunjoni, il-komunità hija mezz ta' evanġelizzazzjoni. Ma jistax ikollna ftit komunjoni u nkunu kuntenti biha. Ma jistax ikollna forsi biss nuqqas ta' konflitti. Irridu naħdmu iktar biex min hemm barra jarana kif aħna ninħabbu ma' xulxin u jibda jgħir għalina, jixtieq li jkun bħalna. L-ewwel riflessjoni nagħmluha fuq bażi ta' parroċċi: kemm-il darba, fil-Kunsill Pastorali Parrokkjali tkellimna fuq kif se nkabbru l-komunjoni? Il-mumenti ta' kif se nkabbru x-xhieda tagħna, ta' komunjoni bejnietna, naħseb li jridu jkunu spiss fuq l-aġenda tagħna.

Imsejħin u mibgħutin

It-tieni riflessjoni: irridu niftakru li kull wieħed u waħda minna, membri ta' din il-komunità, irridu nikkunsidraw żewġ affarijiet li l-ewwel insara, l-ewwel appostli kienu jikkunsidrawhom.

L-ewwelnett, li aħna lkoll irridu nħossu li aħna msejħin u li aħna weġibna għal din is-sejħa. Ġesù kien ċar: 'Mhux intom għażiltu lili, iżda jiena għażilt lilkom'. Aħna, kultant, din il-kelma konna napplikawha għas-saċerdoti u r-reliġjużi u nieqfu hemm. Naħseb irridu li kull wieħed u waħda minna japplikaha għalih. Aħna qegħdin

hawn għax aħna ġejna msejħin; ġejna magħżulin. Dik tagħtik ċertu sens ta' umiltà. Jiena ma niswa xejn fija nnifsi. Jien niswa għaliex ġejt imsejjaħ; għaliex il-Mulej ra fija xi ħaġa li jien forsi ma rajtx, imma Hu ra u riedni nagħtihielu lura. Is-sejħa rridu nħossuha kontinwament.

It-tieni kelma li kull wieħed u waħda minna jrid iħoss hija li aħna mibgħutin. Il-kelma 'appostolat' tfisser missjoni, u missjoni tfisser li xi ħadd bagħtek biex tagħmel xi ħaġa. Aħna mibgħutin. Mibgħutin jiġifieri li r-raġuni għaliex qegħdin flimkien hija għaliex il-Mulej irid jibgħatna biex inwasslu l-Kelma tiegħu.

Jekk jien nifraħ biss għax xi ħadd bagħtni, qatt ma jien se nagħmel xi ħaġa tiegħi. Tiftakru Ġesù? Ma kienx jgħid: 'Kemm jien bravu, għax għamilt xi ħaġa. Għax il-Missier bagħtni. Għax mhux minn rajja, imma l-Missier bagħtni'.

Kemm hu sabiħ dan is-sens ta' mibgħutin! Jien qiegħed fil-kummissjoni għax xi ħadd bagħtni hemmhekk. Jien qiegħed kappillan għax l-Arċisqof bagħtni. Jien qiegħed isqof għax xi ħadd għażilni. Dan huwa l-ispirtu: magħżulin, imsejħin u mibgħutin; kull wieħed u waħda minna.

Ladarba aħna ġejna magħżulin, aħna ma għażilniex lil xulxin. Aħna qegħdin flimkien għaliex il-Mulej għażel lilek u lilek u lilek, u fit-triq iltqajna ma' xulxin. Jekk aħna ġejna flimkien għax ilkoll ġejna magħżulin, kif imbagħad nagħmlu l-fazzjonijiet? U 'jien ta' Apollo' – tant inkwieta San Pawl. U 'jien ta' Ċefa'. U 'jien ta' xi ħadd' Min hemm ħdejk, mhux tridu jinbidel għalik, imma inti trid tinbidel biex taċċettah għaliex il-Mulej għażlu. Ma tistax tibni komunità fuq bażi umana biss; ma tistax. Trid dejjem kontinwament tiftakar li min hemm ħdejk il-Mulej għażlu.

Dejjem ftakru dwar meta Ġesù kien miexi fit-triq mal-appostli

tiegħu u fettillu waqaf ħdejn mejda tat-taxxi. F'daqqa waħda jkun hemm Pietru li jisma' lil Ġesù jgħid: 'Ejja warajja'. Min jaf x'qal, Pietru!? 'Ajma kif se jirranġana! Konna tant tajbin, il-ħin kollu nitkellmu fuq ix-xbieki u fuq il-ħut! Ma' dan x'se nagħmlu?' Min-naħa l-oħra, nimmaġina lil Mattew. Dan jibda miexi wara l-Mulej Ġesù u jibda jistaqsi: 'X'jismek inti?' 'Pietru'. 'X'tagħmel, Piet?' 'Sajjied kont.' Għal dak kienet isbaħ, għax ħdax minnhom kienu sajjieda. ' U jien kif se ngħix meta la naf fuq il-ħut, la naf fuq ix-xbiek, la naf fuq is-snanar... X'se nagħmel jien?' Kieku xi ħadd minnhom mar għand Ġesù u qallu: 'Int iva, Mulej, imma dan le', Ġesù kien jgħidlu: 'Jiddispjaċini, imma m'għandikx post miegħi għax dak jien nagħżlu mhux int tagħżiluli'.

Mela anke fil-komunjoni, irridu ninbidlu ftit aħna biex naċċettaw lil min hemm ħdejna. U min hemm ħdejna jrid jinbidel ftit hu – fil-ħsibijiet etc. – biex naċċettaw lil xulxin.

It-tielet riflessjoni: araw taħsbu li l-komunità, jew il-parroċċa tgħix fl-ajru! Hemm parroċċa u hemm komunità għax hemm individwi li jagħtu s-sehem tagħhom. Kieku kulħadd imur, ma tibqax parroċċa u ma tibqax lanqas Knisja u komunità.

Meta kont għadni ngħix fil-komunità, darba mort nieħu ftit tè fil-*mess* u nnotajt li filwaqt li l-kontejner tat-tè il-jum ta' qabel kien vojt, dakinhar kien mimli. Irriflettejt li kien mimli mhux għax imlietu l-komunità, imma għax xi ħadd mill-komunità kien tant ġeneruż li mlieli t-tè biex insibu l-għada. Hemmhekk bdejt nifhem.

Il-komunità ma teżistix fl-ajru; il-parroċċa ma teżistix fl-ajru. Aħna m'għandniex nitfgħu fuq l-oħrajn billi ngħidu: 'M'hemmx il-parroċċa? M'hemmx il-Kunsill Pastorali Parrokkjali?' Le; il-parroċċa hija s-*sum total*, tgħaqqad il-ġenerożità tagħna lkoll. Meta tonqos ta' xi ħadd, tkun qed tonqos dik li hija l-*image* tal-parroċċa. Issib forsi min

jitkellem u mbagħad ma jagħtix is-sehem tiegħu. Le. Issib min jgħid x'għandhom jagħmlu l-oħrajn. Le. Meta nagħti jien se niffurmaha l-komunità.

Il-kwalità tal-imħabba

Il-kwalità tal-imħabba: 'Kif ħabbejtkom jien'. Din mhix faċli. Bħall-imħabba ta' Alla, kif iħobbna Alla ma jista' jħobbna ħadd. Irraġuni hija waħda: għaliex Alla m'għandux il-probema tal-'jien', tal-egoiżmu, tas-suppervja tiegħi biex inħobb. Alla, il-'jien' tiegħu huwa biss imħabba. Jien, il-'jien' tiegħi huwa egoiżmu; dnub tan-nisel.

Għalhekk ħadd jista' jintelaq u jgħid li qed iħobb lill-oħrajn. Ma tistax tagħmel dan għax ir-realtà mhix hekk. Aħna, biex inħobbu lill-oħrajn ma nistgħux nintelqu. Irridu nneħħu l-'jien' fis-sens ta' egoiżmu, kull darba li jiena niddeċiedi li nħobb. Min jintelaq waħdu x'aktarx li se toħroġ l-umanità tiegħu u jaħseb li jkun iħobb imma ma jkun iħobb xejn ħlief li jiddomina lill-oħrajn u jgħid lill-oħrajn x'jagħmlu. Ma tistax tagħmel hekk; kull darba trid tkun ġlieda biex nneħħi l-'jien' min-nofs ħalli jien inħobb il-persuna l-oħra.

L-akbar għadu biex inħobb, ikun fejn ikun, mhux l-ieħor jew l-oħra; l-akbar għadu huwa jien, biex inħobb. Fil-mument li ddeċidejt, l-ikbar *stumbling block* mhux il-persuna li hemm quddiemi, imma jien. Waħda mir-raġunijiet ovvjament hija għaliex il-persuna, meta jien qed naraha u allura se nibni relazzjoni magħha, dik il-persuna nibda naraha minn għajnejja. Jiena lil kulħadd narah min-nuċċali tiegħi u niġġudikah skont in-nuċċali tiegħi. U jekk jien ngħaġġel ħafna, allura ngerger għax dak jimxi bil-mod. Min jgħidlek li dak bilfors irid jimxi bil-pass tiegħek? Imma hekk ngħidu; hekk nagħmlu.

Ikun hemm ukoll il-burdati: illum għandi burdata tajba u allura nistenna lil kulħadd jidħak, waqt li għada mort għal-laqgħa b'burdata

ħażina u nistenna li kulħadd ikun bil-geddum – għax jien għaddejt minn hekk. Din hija r-realtà. Jekk ma nibdewx minn din, ngħixu illużjoni. Din mhux biex tkissirna; anzi biex tifħilna għajnejna.

Allura biex aħna nħobbu, ma nistgħux inħobbu b'umanità biss, b'imħabba umana biss, għax dik ma tibqax enormi. Irridu nħobbu b'umanità li tinbidel f'umanità Kristjana; umanità, imma Kristjana. Il-Papa Ġwanni Pawlu II, fl-enċiklika tiegħu *Veritatis splendor* qal li Alla kien jaf li ma jistax iħallina waħedna, anke kif neżerċitaw l-imħabba. Jekk inti tħares, mhux lili tara, mimli difetti? U jekk jien inħares lejk, mhux lilek mimli difetti se nara? X'għamel Alla? Ħareġ mill-istorja tagħna u bagħat lil Ibnu, li kien jaf kif iġib ruħu fiċ-ċirkustanzi differenti. Ġesù għalhekk qiegħed. Meta kkritikawh, kif ġab ruħu l-Mulej Ġesù? Meta ħaddieħor ma kienx ġeneruż, kif ġab ruħu? Jien irrid nipprova nipparaguna l-imħabba tiegħi ma' dak li għallimni l-Mulej Ġesù.

Komunità li tfittex lill-oħrajn

L-aħħar ħaġa: komunità Kristjana qatt ma hija komda fiha nfisha. Komunità Kristjana hija ħafna skomda għax hemm ħafna barra li għadhom mhumiex magħna. Fil-mument li komunità - jista' jkun grupp – tkun komda fiha nfisha, 'kemm aħna tajbin', bħalma ried jgħid Pietru dakinhar tat-Trasfigurazzjoni, hemmhekk ikun ġa beda l-kollass ta' dik il-komunità; ma tibqax komunità Kristjana għax tingħalaq fiha nfisha. U jekk il-grazza tkun ġejja minn Alla, qatt ma tista' tingħalaq fiha nfisha. Mela trid tkun komunità, l-ewwelnett li qegħda tfittex lill-oħrajn li huma barra. Fil-Kunsill Pastorali Parrokkjali, kemm qed jieħdu prijorità l-mistoqsijiet ta' kif se mmorru wara dawk li hemm barra, u x'se nagħmlu biex dawk ukoll ikunu magħna?

Barra minn hekk, komunità li tħobb, anke lil dawk ta' barra, trid tkun komunità li tilqa' - bl-Ingliż, *a welcoming community.* U

jekk xi ħadd jiġi jfittex, jew inġibuh lura? X'qed nagħmlu biex iħossu kemm huwa verament *welcome* fil-komunità kollha? X'festa qed nagħmlulu? Kif qed ngħinuh biex ikun jista' jinbena, forsi wara ħafna snin li kien bogħod mill-Knisja? Qed inħalluh waħdu? Jew il-komunità qed tippreparalu post fejn nifirħu bih, fejn aħna ngħinuh?

Jalla din il-laqgħa tkompli tkabbarna skond ir-rieda tal-Mulej.

18 ta' April 2009
Sala tal-Iskola Santa Monika,
Għira.

STQARRIJA TAL-ARĊISQOF TA' MALTA U L-ISQOF TA' GĦAWDEX

Sogħba dwar ġrajjiet fil-Karnival tan-Nadur

Bħala Isqfijiet ta' Malta u Għawdex, nixtiequ nesprimu d-dispjaċir tagħna għal dak li ġara fil-Karnival tan-Nadur, Għawdex, ukoll minn xi nies li ġew apposta għalhekk.

Irridu nuru s-sogħba tagħna għal dawk li ħadu sehem f'dawn il-ġrajjiet. Jiddispjaċina li biex jifirħu ħassew li kellhom jaqgħu f'dawn l-għemejjel. Nitolbu li jagħrfu aħjar u jirrispettaw kemm il-valuri nsara kif ukoll dawk ċivili tal-poplu tagħna.

Nixtiequ wkoll nuru li dan kollu jmur kontra l-Liġi li tħares dawn il-valuri għall-ġid komuni. Dawn il-valuri, imsaħħin mill-Kostituzzjoni u l-liġijiet għandhom jiġu mħarsa.

Huwa avvanz fis-soċjetà li qed tiddefendi d-drittijiet tal-minoranza li għandhom ħsibijiet differenti minn dawk tal-maġġoranza tal-poplu. Iżda naħsbu li ħadd m'għandu d-dritt li jirridikola t-twemmin ta' oħrajn b'dan il-mod.

Nagħmlu appell lill-Awtoritajiet biex jiddefendu mhux biss id-drittijiet tal-minoranza, iżda wkoll tal-ġid komuni mħaddan mill-maġġoranza tal-poplu. Qegħdin nitkellmu fuq is-sens reliġjuż ta' ħafna Maltin u Għawdxin u d-dritt għad-deċenza, iktar u iktar f'avveniment fil-pubbliku, fejn kien preżenti kulħadd bil-familja u bit-tfal.

Meta ma tittieħedx azzjoni, wieħed ma jibqax newtrali, iżda jkun qed japprova dak kollu li sar. Aħna ċerti li dan mhux il-każ.

Nittamaw li fil-ġejjieni, inkunu ħafna iktar attenti.

+ PAWL CREMONA O.P., Arċisqof ta' Malta

+ MARIO GRECH, Isqof ta' Għawdex

05 ta' Marzu 2009

Ċirkolari Numru 29 ĠIMGĦA TA' SAGRIFIĊĊJU 2009

Bħal snin oħra, is-Segretarjat Assistenza Soċjali ta' l-Azzjoni Kattolika se jorganizza "Ġimgħa ta' Sagrifiċċju" minn nhar il-Ġimgħa tad-Duluri 3 ta' April, sal-Ġimgħa l-Kbira 10 ta' April, bit-tema:

"QRIB U ATTENTI GĦAN-NIES FIL-B|ONN"

Għal dan l-iskop, matul id-dati msemmija hawn fuq, f'kull knisja fl-Arċidjoċesi għandhom jitqegħdu kaxxi bil-kitba "Ġimgħa ta' Sagrifiċċju", biex nitfgħu fihom l-offerti tagħna.

Bis-saħħa ta' l-offerti ġenerużi tagħna, speċjalment matul il-Ġimgħa tas-Sagrifiċċju, fis-snin li għaddew is-Segretarjat Assistenza Soċjali ta' l-Azzjoni Kattolika kompla jiżviluppa l-ħidma tiegħu, u għen materjalment ħafna individwi u familji fil-parroċċi. Ħarreġ ukoll persuni u saħħaħ l-organizzazzjoni tiegħu biex jingħata servizz kemm jista' jkun wiesgħa lil ħutna li jinħtieġu diversi forom ta' għajnuna.

Maħruġa mill-Kurja Arċiveskovili, Floriana, illum 20 ta' Marzu 2009.

+ Annetto Depasquale
Isqof Awżiljarju
Vigarju Ġenerali

Mons. Lawrence Gatt
Kanċellier

Ċirkulari Numru 31 **JUM IL-KARITA' 2009**

Nhar il-Ħadd, 26 ta' April 2009, b'inizjattiva tal-Kunsill tas-Segretarjat Ħidma Soċjali u ta' Karità (CARITAS), fl-Arċidjoċesi tagħna se niċċelebraw Jum il-Karità bit-tema **"Kompli agħti sehmek"**.

Fil-Quddies kollu tas-Sibt filgħaxija u tal-Ħadd, 25 u 26 ta' April, se ssir il-ġabra għall-ħidmiet u Djar ta' Karità li l-Knisja għandha f'Malta. Fl-istess ġranet fil-knejjes kollha se jkun hemm kaxxi li fihom jistgħu jitqegħdu ikel u oġġetti oħra utli biex jitqassmu fid-Djar tal-Knisja għat-Tfal, għaż-żgħażagħ u għall-Persuni bi bżonnijiet speċjali, skond kif qed jiġi indikat lil kull Parroċċa.

Il-flus miġbura mbagħad jitqassmu biex jiġu megħjuna, skond fejn l-aktar ikun hemm ħtieġa, id-diversi Djar u ħidmiet ta' Karità li l-Knisja f'Malta hi mpenjata fihom. Fost dawn hemm id-***Djar li jilqgħu tfal li fit-trobbija tagħhom sabu ruħhom f'diffikultajiet serji u familji li jkunu għaddejjin minn vjolenza fid-dar; is-Servizzi tal-CARITAS MALTA; id-Dar tal-Providenza; id-Djar għall-Anzjani; Dar Pirotta; is-Segretarjat Assistenza Soċjali ta' l-Azzjoni Kattolika u l-ħidma tas-Segretarjat Emigrazzjoni u Turiżmu għar-Refuġjati.***

Bl-għajnuna ġeneruża li nagħtu lil dawn id-Djar u ħidmiet ta' Karità li aħna, bħala Knisja, qegħdin inżommu f'Malta nkunu qegħdin naqdu lil Kristu f'ħutna li jinsabu fil-bżonn. Fl-istess ħin inkunu nfissru l-apprezzament tagħna lejn dawk li jmexxu dawn id-Djar u ħidmiet jew jaħdmu fihom bil-qalb u b'sagrifiċċju bħala volontiera jew impjegati. Il-Mulej ibierek u jippremja kull sagrifiċċju li nagħmlu biex infissru b'mod prattiku l-imħabba tagħna.

Nixtieq nieħu din l-okkażjoni biex f'isem Monsinjur Arċisqof nirringrazzja lil dawk kollha li permezz ta' ħidma ta' volontarjat u ta'

offerti materjali matul is-sena jgħinu fil-ħidmiet u Djar ta' Karità li tmexxi l-Knisja f'Malta.

Maħruġa mill-Kurja Arċiveskovili ta' Malta, Floriana, illum 15 ta' April 2009.

+ Annetto Depasquale
Isqof Awżiljarju
Vigarju Ġenerali

Mons. Lawrence Gatt
Kanċellier

ĊIRKULARI Numru 32

INVESTITURI U ĊELEBRAZZJONIJIET TA' ORDNIJIET KAVALLERESKI

Inħasset il-ħtieġa illi jitfakkru d-direttivi li kienu ngħataw fiċ-Ċirkulari tad-29 ta' Settembru 1987, li kienu diġà tfakkru permezz taċ-Ċirkulari tas-7 ta' April 1997 dwar Investituri u Ċelebrazzjonijiet ta' Ordnijiet Kavvallereski fil-knejjes fl-Arċidjoċesi.

Iċ-Ċirkulari tad-29 ta' Settembru 1987 tgħid hekk:

Billi dan l-aħħar qiegħed jikber in-numru ta' dawk l-Ordnijiet

Kavallereski li jeżistu fil-Gżira biex iżommu ċ-ċerimonja tal-investitura f'xi knisja, din il-Kurja trid tgħarraf li ebda investitura ta' Kavallieri ma tista' ssir fil-knejjes tal-Arċidjoċesi jekk l-Ordni involut ma jkunx rikonoxxut uffiċċjalment mis-Santa Sede.

Il-Kappillani u s-Superjuri tal-Ordnijiet Reliġjużi huma wkoll mgħarrfa li dawn ma jistgħux jiġu mistiedna biex jieħdu sehem f'purċissjonijiet u f'funzjonijiet oħra tal-Knisja bl-abitu kavalleresk.

Is-saċerdoti djoċesani u r-reliġjużi kemm irġiel u kemm nisa ma għandhomx isiru membri ta' ordnijiet kavallereski jekk mhux in konformità man-normi tas-Santa Sede u bil-permess tal-Ordinarju.

Iċ-Ċirkulari tas-7 ta' April 1997 tgħid ukoll li *l-Kurja għaldaqstant tixtieq tfakkar lil kull min hu immedjatament responsabbli għall-knejjes fl-Arċidjoċesi biex jassigura li d-direttivi taċ-Ċirkolari numru 183 jiġu mħarsa bir-reqqa.*

Maħruġa mill-Kurja Arċiveskovili ta' Malta, Floriana, illum 27 ta' April 2009.

+ Annetto Depasquale
Isqof Awżiljarju
Vigarju Ġenerali

Mons. Lawrence Gatt
Kanċellier

DIGRIET

Peress li għal dawn l-aħħar snin l-Uffiċċju ta' Delegat għas-Segretarjat għall-Komunikazzjoni Soċjali kien u għadu vakanti;

Peress li hi xewqa tiegħi li dan is-Segretarjat ikun immexxi minn persuna għaqlija u b'esperjenza fil-ħidma tal-komunikazzjoni soċjali;

Wara li għamilt il-konsultazzjonijiet li deherli opportuni, naħtar lir-Reverendu Patri Charles Tabone O.P. bħala Delegat Tiegħi fl-istess Segretarjat b'effett mid-data tal-lum, bid-dmirijiet kif elenkati fid-Digrieti tat-3 ta' Diċembru 1986 u tal-31 ta' Awwissu 1987 dwar is-Segretarjati Djoċesani.

Huwa jaqdi dan l-uffiċċju għal perijodu ta' ħames snin.

Mogħti mill-Kurja Arċiveskovili ta' Malta, Furjana, illum 24 ta' Jannar 2009.

+ Pawlu Cremona O.P.
Arċisqof ta' Malta

Mons.Lawrence Gatt
Kanċellier

DIGRIET

Nilqgħu t-talba tar-Revendu Arċipriet Kanonku Evan Caruana biex, fil-lista tal-kniejjes mhux parrokkjali u kappelli fejn jistgħu jiġu ċelebrati ż-Żwiġijiet, tiżdied il-Kappella ta' Ġesù Ħniena Divina taż-Żona ta' San Pawl tat-Tarġa, fil-parroċċa tan-Naxxar.

Mogħti mill-Kurja tal-Arċisqof ta' Malta, Floriana, illum 21 ta' Frar 2009.

+ Annetto Depasquale
Isqof titulari ta' Aradi
Vigarju Ġenerali

Mons. Lawrence Gatt
Kanċellier

KONFERENZA EPISKOPALI MALTIJA

KOMUNIKAT

Fid-9 ta' Ottubru 1998, il-Konferenza Episkopali Maltija ppublikat Digriet biex tirregola l-għoti ta' permessi mill-Ordinarji tal-post lil ħutna Nsara ċelijaċi biex ikunu jistgħu jitqarbnu b'ostji speċjali, bi gluten imnaqqas, skond direttivi maħruġa mill-Kongregazzjoni għad-Duttrina tal-Fidi tas-Santa Sede, biex hekk ikunu jistgħu jersqu b'aktar ħeffa għat-Tqarbin Imqaddes.

Fid-dawl ta' direttivi aġġornati li ħarġet l-istess Kongregazzjoni, u ta' l-esperjenza li ksibna f'Malta u Għawdex fit-tħaddim tad-Digriet ta' l-1998, il-Konferenza Episkopali ta' Malta, imqanqla mill-istess ħeġġa pastorali għal dawn l-Aħwa ċelijaċi, iddeċidiet li toħroġ linji ta' gwida ġodda dwar dan.

1. Kull persuna li tinstab li hi soġġetta għall-kondizzjoni Ċelijaka tista', personalment jew permezz tal-Kappillan tagħha, tressaq talba individwali lill-Isqof Djoċesan tagħha biex jingħatalha l-permess tuża ostji speċjali li fihom il-gluten ikun imnaqqas ('low-gluten hosts').

2. F'każ ta' minorenni, it-talba tista' ssir mill-ġenituri jew mill-persuni li t-tfal huma fdati f'idejhom.

3. It-talba għandha tkun kkumpanjata minn dokument maħruġ mill-awtoritajiet mediċi lil persuni li, jkunu ġew dijanjostikati bħala ċelijaċi.

4. Il-permess jingħata bil-miktub mill-Ordinarju tal-post. Il-

permess jista' ikun fih il-kondizzjonijet ġenerali jew partikulari li jkunu jridu jiġu mħarsa mill-individwu li jingħata dan il-permess.

5. Il-permess għandu dejjem jinftiehem bħala mogħti suġġett għall-kondizzjoni illi jibqgħu mħarsin id-direttivi mogħtija, jew li għad jistgħu jingħataw, mis-Santa Sede jew minn Awtoritajiet oħra kompetenti tal-Knisja. Fost dawn hemm li:

a) L-ostji speċjali ma jistgħux ikunu dawk li minnhom il-gluten ikun tneħħa kollu, peress li dawn mhumiex meqjusa bħala materja valida għall-Ewkaristija; iżda dawk li fihom il-gluten ikun biss tnaqqas, b'mod li jkun fihom ammont biżżejjed biex ikun jista' jsir il-ħobż, ma jkunx hemm żieda ta' materjali barranin, u li l-proċess li bih ikunu saru dawn l-ostji ma jbiddilx in-natura tal-ħobż;

b) L-ostji li jintużaw iridu jkunu ġew approvati mill-Ordinarju tal-post, li jrid jara li l-kondizzjonijiet imsemmija jkunu ġew imħarsa;

c) Il-permess jingħata biss sakemm il-persuna tibqa' milquta mill-kondizzjoni taċ-Ċeljakija.

6. Il-persuna li tingħata l-permess tuża dawn l-ostji speċjali tibqa' responsabbli li timxi skond ir-rakkomandazzjonijet tat-tabib dwar l-użu ta' dawn l-ostji.

7. Il-persuna li tingħata dan il-permess (jew il-ġenituri jew kuraturi tagħha), għandha tkellem lill-kappillan jew liċ-ċelebrant u turih dan il-permess, u titolbu jipprovdilha l-faċilitajiet kollha biex tkun tista' tagħmel użu minnu.

8. Persuni li jgħixu barra minn Malta, li għandhomn il-permess ta' l-Ordinarju tal-post tagħhom biex jużaw ostji bi gluten imnaqqas, għandhom jingħataw l-istess faċilitajiet biex jitqarbnu b'dawn l-ostji speċjali bħal ma jingħataw lill-persuni li jirċievu l-permess mill-Ordinarju tagħhom f'Malta.

9. Kwantità adegwata ta' dawn l-ostji speċjali tista' tinżamm mill-Kappillani ta' Sptarijiet u Istituzzjonijiet oħra, bħal ma huma Djar għall-Anzjani, Ċentri ta' Riabilitazzjoni jew Korrezzjoni. Dawn l-ostji speċjali għandhom jinżammu għal kollox separati mill-ostji ordinarji, u taħt ir-responsabbiltà tal-Kappillan ta' dak l-Isptar jew Istituzzjoni. Il-Kappillan għandu jara li dawn l-ostji speċjali ukoll ma jkunux qdiemu, u kull sena għandu jgħarraf lill-Ordinarju tal-post dwar l-użu ta' dawn l-ostji speċjali f'dik l-Istituzzjoni.

10. Is-saċerdoti huma mfakkra fl-obbligu pastorali u kanoniku (kanoni 843) gravi li għandhom - korrispondenti għad-dritt fundamentali ta' l-Insara li jirċievu minn għand ir-Rgħajja tagħhom l-għajnuniet li jinħtieġu mill-ġid spiritwali tal-Knisja (kanoni 213) - li jilqgħu bi mħabba lil dawn l-Aħwa bi bżonnijiet speċjali, u jgħinuhom mill-aħjar li jistgħu.

Maħruġ mis-Sede tal-Konferenza Episkopali Maltija, Floriana, illum 16 ta' Jannar 2009.

Mons. Joseph Magro
Segretarju
Konferenza Episkopali ta' Malta

STQARRIJIET OĦRA MILL-KURJA

Il-PRO-VIGARJU ĠENERALI NOMINAT KANONKU TAL-KAPITLU METROPOLITAN

Monsinjur Arċisqof Pawl Cremona O.P. innomina lil Dun Anton Gouder, Pro-Vigarju Ġenerali, bħala Kanonku tal-Kapitlu Metropolitan.

Mons. Anton Gouder twieled l-Isla fis-16 ta' Novembru 1951. Huwa ġie ordnat saċerdot fid-19 ta' Ġunju 1977. L-ewwel ħidma pastorali tiegħu kienet bħala Viċi-Parroku fl-Isla. Fl-1983 sar kappillan tal-Parroċċa ta' Kristu Re, Raħal Ġdid. Fit-2 ta' Awissu 1989 ġie nominat Segretarju Pastorali. F'Settembru 2001 sar Rettur tas-Seminarju. F'Jannar 2007, Mons. Arċisqof Cremona ħatru Pro-Vigarju Ġenerali.

Il-Kapitlu tal-Katidral hu magħmul minn 25 kanoniku.

Fil-Kapitlu hemm żewġ taqsimiet, waħda għall-Katidral tal-Imdina u l-oħra għall-KonKatidral ta' San Ġwann.

06 ta' Marzu 2009

ĦAMSIN SENA SAĊERDOTI

Mons. Arċisqof Pawl Cremona O.P. nhar is-Sibt, 14 ta' Marzu 2009, fil-KonKatidral ta' San Ġwann, fil-5.30pm, se jmexxi Konċelebrazzjoni ta' ringrazzjament f'għeluq il-50 sena saċerdozju ta' grupp ta' qassisin u patrijiet li ġew ordnati nhar l-14 ta' Marzu 1959, minn Mons. Arċisqof Mikiel Gonzi.

Is-saċerdoti djoċesani li ġew ordnati ħamsin sena ilu huma: Kan. Mario Agius - Raħal Ġdid, Mons. Edgar Attard – Raħal Ġdid, Mons. Carmelo Borg – Għaxaq, Mons. Joseph Caruana – Birgu, Mons. Carmelo Cassar – Birkirkara, Dun Nikol Debono – Ħamrun, Dun Dominic Degiorgio – Awstralja, Mons. Anton Galea – Valletta, Dun Alfred Manche' – Italja, Dun Francis Mifsud – Żejtun, Dun Carmelo Mifsud – Stati Uniti tal-Amerika, Mons. Lawrenz Mifsud – Siġġiewi, Kan. Francis Perici – Valletta, Mons. Arthur Said Pullicino – Sliema, Kan. Carmelo Zammit – Luqa.

Is-saċerdoti reliġjużi li wkoll ġew ordnati 50 sena ilu huma: Patri Alfred Tabone OFM, Patri Joseph Vella OFM, Patri Thomas Moore OFM Conv, Patri Pelagju Bilocca OFM Kap, Patri Joe Mallia OFM Kap, Patri Pietru Pawl Schembri OFM Kap u Patri Alfred Cachia MSSP, li qiegħed l-Awstralja.

Is-saċerdoti qed jistiednu lill-qraba u lill-ħbieb tagħhom biex jingħaqdu magħhom f'din il-quddiesa ta' radd il-ħajr lil Alla għall-grazzja kbira ta' 50 sena ħidma saċerdotali.

06 ta' Marzu 2009

IL-VIŻTA PASTORALI TAL-ARĊISQOF FIL-PARROĊĊI

Okkażjoni ta' qawmien spiritwali u pastorali

Fl-ewwel tliet xhur tal-Viżta Pastorali tiegħu fil-Parroċċi, Mons. Arċisqof Pawl Cremona O.P. żar disa' parroċċi fejn, fi kliem Mons. Charles Cordina, Segretarju Pastorali kien hemm ħafna stennija u entusjażmu li għenu biex l-esperjenza tkun okkażjoni ta' qawmien spiritwali u pastorali.

Mons. Arċisqof beda l-Viżta Pastorali fl-10 ta' Jannar 2009, b'Viżta fil-Parroċċa ta' Ħ'Attard. Minn dakinhar sal-aħħar ta' Marzu Mons. Arċisqof żar ukoll il-parroċċi ta' Ħal Balzan, Santa Marija ta' Porto Salvo u San Duminku fil-belt Valletta, l-Iklin, il-Gżira, Ta' Xbiex, Floriana, u Santu Wistin fil-belt Valletta.

Fil-Viżta Pastorali, li għaliha ssir tħejjija mifruxa bis-sehem ukoll ta' diversi Delegati tal-Arċisqof, l-Arċisqof jiltaqa' mad-diversi kunsilli, kummissjonijiet u gruppi tal-parroċċa.

Kooperazzjoni u rikonoxximent

F'evalwazzjoni dwar l-esperjenza tal-ewwel tliet xhur, is-Segretarju Pastorali qal:

"Qed ikun hemm ħafna kooperazzjoni minn kulħadd kemm qabel kif ukoll waqt iż-Żjara. L-esperjenza qed isservi ta' *empowerment* qawwi lill-kooperaturi pastorali parrokkjali għall-fatt li qed jagħtu rendikont tal-operat tagħhom lid-Delegati tal-Arċisqof, kif ukoll għal-laqgħat li qed ikollhom mal-Arċisqof. Qed iħossu li l-ħidma tagħhom qed tkun rikonoxxuta.

"Il-Viżta Pastorali qed tagħti l-opportunità li toħroġ fis-sbuħija

tagħha l-Knisja fil-komunitajiet Insara mxerrdin fid-djoċesi ta' Malta, esperjenzi li qed jgħixu, l-eżempju li qed joffru, is-sagrifiċċji li qed jagħmlu, id-dedikazzjoni kontinwa ta' bosta, l-ideat kreattivi li jinħolqu, il-ħajja li tiffjorixxi.

"Ta' inkuraġġiment qed ikunu l-laqgħat sbieħ li l-Arċisqof qed ikollu mat-tfal fl-iskejjel, fejn qed ikun hemm kooperazzjoni kbira mill-istaff amministrattiv u l-għalliema, mat-tfal fiċ-ċentri tat-tagħlim nisrani u l-katekisti tagħhom, u mal-adolexxenti u ż-żgħażagħ.

"L-Arċisqof qed ikollu l-opportunità, u qed jaħtaf l-okkażjoni biex ifiehem u jorjenta fid-direzzjoni t-tajba r-rwol tal-parroċċa u sehem kulħadd, speċjalment tal-lajċi fl-evalwazzjoni. Jidhirli li qed toħroġ ċar is-sitwazzjoni tal-parroċċa kif inhi, x'inhuma l-preġji tagħha, x'inhuma d-diffikultajiet tagħha, u x'inhuma n-nuqqasijiet li jeżistu.

"Qed jinħass il-bżonn, per eżempju, li tissaħħaħ il-formazzjoni tal-operaturi pastorali ħalli jkunu aktar kreattivi fil-ħidma tagħhom u jkunu jistgħu joffru servizz aħjar. Tiltaqa' wkoll ma' każi fejn ir-riżorsi umani jinħass fjakki u jeħtieġu demm ġdid."

Mons. Cordina qal li hu jixtieq jara iktar nies jaħtfu l-opportunità tal-Viżta Pastorali biex jersqu ħalli jkellmu lill-Arċisqof privatament dwar il-parroċċa tagħhom, kif ukoll iktar parteċipazzjoni fil-laqgħat tal-Arċisqof mal-membri tas-soċjetà ċivili u mal-pubbliku fl-Assemblea Parrokkjali, għax mhux kullimkien qed tidher il-preżenza jew it-tip ta' parteċipazzjoni li wieħed jixtieq jara għall-aħjar ġid tal-komunità.

Rapport u rakkomandazzjonijiet

Wara l-Viżta f'parroċċa, is-Segretarju Pastorali qed iħejji rapport li minnu Mons. Arċisqof jislet tlieta jew erba' rakkomandazzjonijiet

pastorali prinċipali li jintegrahom f'messaġġ lill-komunità parrokkjali rispettiva.

Is-Segretarju Pastorali, f'konsultazzjoni mal-Arċisqof, il-Vigarju Ġenerali, il-Pro-Vigarju Ġenerali u diversi persuni oħrajn ta' responsabbiltà fit-tmexxija tad-djoċesi, qed iħejji wkoll rapport finali għall-kappillan tal-parroċċa biex jiddiskutieh mal-Kunsill Pastorali Parrokkjali.

Min-naħa tagħhom, id-Delegati u l-Uffiċjali tal-Kurja tal-Arċisqof qed ikunu mitlubin ikomplu jsegwu l-proposti rakkomandati ħalli jaraw li jiġu attwati.

Parti mill-missjoni tal-isqof

Fil-bidu tal-Viżta Pastorali, Mons. Arċisqof sejjaħ din il-Viżta bħala parti importanti mill-missjoni tiegħu bħala Isqof-Raġħaj tad-djoċesi: "Iċ-ċentru ta' din il-Viżta huwa kull wieħed jew waħda li jagħmlu l-parroċċa, mill-kappillan, għas-saċerdoti u r-reliġjużi, għall-insara kollha. Jiena se nagħti dan il-ħin tiegħi, biex bl-għajnuna tal-Mulej inwettaqkom fil-ħajja tal-Fidi. Qalbi se tkun ukoll lejn dawk li tbegħdu mill-Knisja. Jekk ma nkunx nista' nilħaqhom jien, irrid inħeġġeġ lilkom biex tieħdu ħsiebhom intom."

Il-parroċċi li Mons. Arċisqof se jżur fil-ġimgħat li ġejjin sal-aħħar ta' Lulju huma l-Parroċċa ta' San Pawl Nawfragu fil-belt Valletta, l-Imsida, Madonna ta' Lourdes f'Raħal Ġdid, Kristu Re f'Raħal Ġdid, u Ħal Luqa.

Il-ħsieb hu li Mons. Arċisqof iżur is-70 parroċċa li hawn f'Malta fuq spazju ta' ħames snin.

31 ta' Marzu 2009

ŻJARA TA' KORTESIJA MILL-PRESIDENT LILL-ARĊISQOF

Il-President George Abela dalgħodu, 14 ta' April 2009, għamel żjara ta' kortesija lil Mons. Arċisqof Pawl Cremona O.P. fir-Residenza tal-Arċisqof, Ħ'Attard. Mons. Arċisqof kien akkumpanjat minn Mons. Annetto Depasquale, Isqof Awżiljarju u Vigarju Ġenerali. B'din iż-żjara, il-President irreċiproka Żjara ta' Kortesija li Mons. Arċisqof għamillu fil-Palazz tal-President, fis-6 tax-xahar.

Mons. Arċisqof wera apprezzament għaż-żjara tal-President u rringrazzjah.

Mons. Cremona qal li din iż-żjara hija sinjifikattiva għaliex timmarka l-fatt li l-Knisja dejjem ippruvat tagħti l-aħjar li tista' lis-soċjetà Maltija, waqt li turi wkoll kemm l-Istat jistenna mill-Knisja li hija tkompli tagħti dan il-kontribut.

Mons. Cremona qal li l-Knisja tagħti dan il-kontribut l-ewwelnett permezz tal-membri tagħha, b'dak li huma jagħmlu għall-ġid tas-soċjetà Maltija. It-tieni hemm l-opri ta' solidarjetà soċjali tal-Knisja, fejn il-Knisja dejjem kienet pijuniera u qed tkompli tagħti l-kontribut tagħha. Hemm ukoll il-kontribut tal-valuri li l-Knisja temmen fihom u li hija rċeviet mingħand il-Mulej, li l-Knisja tipproponi lis-soċjetà waqt li din tkun qed tagħżel il-valuri li jmexxuha biex tkun soċjetà dejjem aħjar.

Il-President George Abela qal li m'hemmx dubju li meta xi ħadd jilqgħek f'daru, dan ikun sinjifikat fih innifsu. Żied jgħid li huwa ħa pjaċir ħafna jirreċiproka ż-żjara li kien għamillu Mons. Arċisqof fl-uffiċċju tiegħu fil-Belt.

Il-President Abela qal li l-okkażjoni hija turija mhux biss ta' apprezzament imma wkoll ta' kollaborazzjoni sħiħa bejn Stat u Knisja, għaliex huma jridu jaħdmu, kulħadd fil-qasam tiegħu, f'rispett sħiħ lejn xulxin. Il-President żied jgħid li s-soċjetà Maltija għandha valuri nsara li jimmarkawha u ċertament hu jrid ikun rifless tagħhom fil-kariga u l-persuna tiegħu, il-għaliex dawn taw ċerta stabbilita`.

Il-President Abela semma wkoll is-sehem attiv tal-Knisja, permezz tar-rappreżentant tal-Arċisqof, fil-*Malta Community Chest Fund,* li qiesu d-driegħ soċjali ta' kif l-Istat jittrasmetti dawn il-valuri b'mod materjali lin-nies fil-bżonn. Ftit ġranet oħra se ssir l-ewwel laqgħa tal-*Malta Community Chest Fund* fejn se jitressqu għad-diskussjoni flimkien ċerti ideat ġodda ħalli jintwera x'għandhom ikunu jfissru fis-sustanza l-valuri tas-solidarjetà: il-valuri ta' poplu matur li jgħin mingħajr ma jippretendi xejn lura.

Il-President esprima t-tama li bl-għajnuna tar-rappreżentant tal-Arċisqof fil-*Malta Community Chest Fund* il-poplu Malti, bil-mod il-mod, jiġi indirizzat lejn x'għandhom ifissru verament il-valuri tal-ħniena, tas-solidarjetà u tal-għajnuna lil min fil-bżonn.

14 ta' April 2009

IS-SOĊJETÀ U R-RELIĠJON QUDDIEM IT-TAQLIB FINANZJARJU FID-DINJA

L-Istitut Formazzjoni Pastorali, b'kollaborazzjoni mal-Fondazzjoni *Centesimus Annus* qed jorganizzaw laqgħa fis-sensiela "Djalogu fis-Soċjetà" bit-tema, "*Society and Religion amidst the present Credit Crunch and Global Financial Unease*". Il-laqgħa se ssir nhar it-Tlieta, 12 ta' Mejju 2009, fis-6.30pm, fil-Corinthia Palace Hotel, Attard.

Il-kelliema se jkunu: Dr. Catherine McGeachy, *lecturer* u konsulenta għall-industrija fl-oqsma ta' maniġment u żvilupp tar-riżorsi umani; is-Sur Mario P. Galea. *Chairperson* tal-*Ethics Committee* tal-*Malta Institute of Accountants*; u s-Sur Roderick Chalmers, *Chairperson* tal-Bord tad-Diretturi tal-Bank of Valletta plc, Malta. Se jmexxi l-laqgħa il-Professur Salvino Busuttil u jkun hemm ukoll ħin għad-diskussjoni. Għal-laqgħa, li se tkun presjeduta mill-Prof. Salvino Busuttil, hu mistieden kulħadd.

Id-Djalogi fis-Soċjetà bdew f'Mejju 2007, frott tal-*Istitut ta' Formazzjoni Pastorali* li twaqqaf mis-Sinodu Djocesan u li wiehed mill-għanijiet tiegħu hu li jippromwovi dawn l-ispazji ta' diskussjoni u ta' djalogu mas-soċjetà Maltija. Din l-inizjattiva timmira li toffri opportunitajiet u spazji fejn l-isfida li ġġib magħha l-fidi ma tibqax biss ħaġa tradizzjonali imma tkun stedina li, permezz tagħha, il-persuna tidħol iktar fil-fond tat-tifsira li ġġib magħha s-sejħa li timxi wara Kristu fis-soċjetà tagħna u fl-isfond ta' sfidi u opportunitajiet kontemporanji. Id-Djalogi huma okkażjoni fejn jiġu diskussi sitwazzjonijiet li jikkonċernaw lil ħafna u jipprovdu wkoll opportunità biex il-Knisja tisma' u taghraf il-ħtiġiet li juru ruħhom f'oqsma differenti professjonali u soċjali.

17 ta' April 2009

ĊELEBRAZZJONI TAL-ARĊISQOF MA' ŻGĦAŻAGĦ FIL-VOLUNTARJAT

Iż-żgħażagħ impenjati fil-voluntarjat u l-ħbieb tagħhom qed jiġu mistednin għal ċelebrazzjoni ta' ħbiberija u fidi ma' Mons. Arċisqof Pawl Cremona O.P., li se ssir nhar l-Erbgħa, 29 ta' April 2009, fil-Knisja Omm tal-Parir it-Tajjeb, Paceville fis-7.30pm. Matul din l-attività, Mons. Arċisqof jagħti l-mandat liż-żgħażagħ voluntiera għall-ħidma tagħhom fis-sajf, waqt li fl-istess ħin tkun imfakkra l-ħidma li ssir minn dawn il-voluntiera matul is-sena.

Din il-laqgħa ta' qabel is-sajf, li issa waslet fit-tielet sena tagħha, tlaqqa' flimkien żgħażagħ impenjati f'ħidma voluntarja f'komunitajiet f'Malta kif ukoll barra minn Malta. Iċ-ċelebrazzjoni ta' din is-sena hija parti mill-mixja li l-Knisja qed tagħmel maż-żgħażagħ fuq it-tema magħżula mill-Papa Benedittu XVI għall-2009: "It-tama tagħna hi f'Alla l-ħaj", mill-ittra ta' San Pawl lil Timotju.

L-attività hija kummissjonata mill-Kummissjoni Djoċesana Żgħażagħ. L-animazzjoni se tkun f'idejn il-grupp LIFT. Iż-żgħażagħ li se jattendu huma mitlubin jirreġistraw billi jibagħtu *email* fl-indirizz *info@kdz.org.mt* jew jittelelefonaw fuq in-numru 21484506.

17 ta' April 2009

FESTA TA' SAN ĠUŻEPP ĦADDIEM 2009

Il-bżonn tal-kollaborazzjoni quddiem il-kriżi ekonomika mondjali

It-tema tal-attivitajiet li t-Taqsima Pastorali fid-Dinja tax-Xogħol ħejjiet għall-Festa ta' San Ġużepp Ħaddiem 2009 tiffoka fuq il-bżonn li quddiem l-effetti kuntrarji li l-kriżi ekonomika mondjali qed ikollha fuq id-dinja tax-xogħol, ikun hemm il-kollaborazzjoni responsabbli meħtieġa biex jinstabu soluzzjoni tajbin u dejjema.

Is-sejħa tat-Taqsima Pastorali fid-Dinja tax-Xogħol tgħid:

"Nafu li biex tingħeleb il-kriżi ekonomika u soċjali li għaddejjin minnha jeħtieġ sforz liberu u responsabbli mingħand kulħadd. Fi kliem ieħor, jeħtieġ li jingħelbu l-interessi privati u settorjali u ningħaqdu biex flimkien naffrontaw id-diffikultajiet li qegħdin iħabbtu kull ambjent soċjali, l-aktar lid-dinja tax-xogħol. Dan qatt qabel ma kien urġenti daqs illum; id-diffikultajiet li qegħdin iħabbtu d-dinja tax-xogħol jitolbu mill-elementi differenti li jsawru fis-soċjetà kollaborazzjoni aktar mill-qrib u aktar effettiva.

"Fil-Bibbja wkoll hemm referenza qawwija għas-sejħa għall-kollaborazzjoni: Fil-Ktieb ta' Qoħelet naqraw: 'Tnejn min-nies aħjar minn wieħed waħdu, għax fejda akbar ikollu xogħolhom. Jekk jaqa' wieħed, l-ieħor jista' jqajmu, imma miskin hu min hu waħdu, għax ma għandux min iqajmmu' (Qoħ. 4, 0-10). Għalhekk, bħala tema għall-Festa ta' San Ġużepp Ħaddiem, għażilna din il-kwotazzjoni."

L-attivitajiet jibdew nhar it-Tlieta, 28 ta' April, meta Mons. Arċisqof Pawl Cremona O.P. iżur il-ħaddiema ta' Studio 7 Complex

f'Birkirkara u l-ħaddiema tal-General Workers' Union fil-belt Valletta, fejn iqaddes b'sufraġju għal ruħ il-ħaddiema li tilfu ħajjithom fuq il-post tax-xogħol.

L-attivitajiet ikomplu l-għada, l-Erbgħa, 29 ta' April, meta Mons. Arċisqof iżur il-ħaddiema ta' Miller Distributers Ltd f'Ħal Luqa u l-ħaddiema tal-Union Ħaddiema Magħqudin fil-Floriana, fejn jiċċelebra quddiesa u jwassal il-messaġġ annwali tiegħu lill-ħaddiema.

17 ta' April 2009

JUM IL-KARITA 2009

Fil-Quddies kollu tas-Sibt filgħaxija u tal-Ħadd, 25 u 26 ta' April 2009, fil-knejjes kollha tal-Arċidjocesi ta' Malta se ssir il-ġabra annwali għall-ħidmiet tad-Djar ta' Karità li l-Knisja għandha f'Malta.

Il-flus li jinġabru jitqassmu biex jiġu megħjunin, skond fejn l-aktar ikun hemm bżonn, id-diversi Djar u Ħidmiet ta' Karità li l-Knisja f'Malta hija mpenjata fihom. Fost dawn hemm id-Djar li jilqgħu tfal u żgħażagħ li fit-trobbija tagħhom sabu ruħhom f'diffikultà, u ommijiet u tfal li għaddew minn esperjenza ta' vjolenza domestika. Hemm ukoll is-Servizzi tal-Caritas Malta; id-Dar tal-Providenza; id-Djar għall-Anzjani; is-Segretarjat Assistenza Soċjali ta' l-Azzjoni Kattolika, it-Taqsima Refuġjati tal-Kummissjoni Emigranti u Dar Pirotta.

Fid-Djar tal-Knisja għat-Tfal bħalissa hemm residenti madwar 223 tifel u tifla. Hemm ukoll ħames ċentri għal matul il-jum li jospitaw fihom 60 tifel u tifla, kif ukoll żewġ postijiet għal każi ta' vjolenza domestika li jospitaw 18-il familja bit-tfal. Il-Caritas qed toffri 22 servizz differenti u tilħaq mijiet ta' nies. Ikun hemm madwar 665 żagħżugħ u żagħżugħa fis-sena bi problema tad-droga li jfittxu l-għajnuna tal-Caritas. Fid-Dar tal-Providenza hemm residenti 100 persuna b'diżabilità. Fid-Djar għall-Anzjani, li huma 14, hemm 700 persuna. Is-Segretarjat Assistenza Soċjali jgħin lil ħafna nies bi problemi diversi u fil-bżonn. It-Taqsima Refuġjati qed tagħti kenn lil madwar 400 persuna f'14-il post immexxijin mill-Kummissjoni Emigranti.

Fl-istess jiem tal-25 u s-26 ta' April, fil-knejjes kollha se jitqegħdu kaxxi fejn min jixtieq ikun jista' jqiegħed xi oggetti ta' ikel jew oġġetti oħrajn utli biex jitqassmu fost id-Djar għat-Tfal,

għaż-żgħażagħ u Persuni bi bżonnijiet speċjali, skont kif qed jiġi indikati lil kull Parroċċa.

Jum Il-Karità jiġi organizzat b'inizjattiva tal-Kunsill tas-Segretarjat Ħidma Soċjali u ta' Karità (Caritas Malta). Din is-sena t-tema hija: "Kompli agħti sehmek".

20 ta' April 2009

ĦAMES SEMINARISTI SE JIRĊIEVU L-MINISTERU TAL-LETTORAT

Mons. Arċisqof Pawl Cremona O.P. nhar it-Tnejn, 27 ta' April 2009, se jistitwixxi ħames seminaristi bħala Letturi, waqt Quddiesa li se jiċċelebra fil-Knisja Parrokkjali ta' San Ġorġ, Ħal Qormi, fis-6.30pm. Is-seminaristi, li jinsabu fil-ħames sena tal-kors tas-Seminarju, huma Stephen Attard, mill-Parroċċa ta' Marija Mtellgħa s-Sema, Mosta; René Antoine Cilia, mill-Parroċċa ta' San Ġorġ, Ħal Qormi; Nicholas Dimech, mill-Parroċċa ta' San Nikola, Siġġiewi; Stephen Magro, mill-Parroċċa tal-Madonna tal-Grazzja, Ħaż-Żabbar; David Torpiano, mill-Parroċċa ta' San Publju, Floriana.

L-għoti tal-Ministeru tal-Lettorat jimmarka pass ieħor fil-mixja tas-seminaristi lejn is-saċerdozju. Bħala Letturi huma se jingħatalhom l-uffiċċju li jxandru l-Kelma ta' Alla waqt il-liturġija, iħabirku biex jgħinu lin-nies iħejju ruħhom aħjar biex jirċievu ssagramenti u jxandru l-messaġġ tas-salvazzjoni lil min ma semgħax bih.

Il-Komunità tas-Seminarju qed tħeġġeġ lil kulħadd biex jitlob għal aktar vokazzjonijiet, u biex il-Mulej ibierek lis-seminaristi kollha ħalli l-Knisja jkollha aktar rgħajja skont qalbu.

24 ta' April 2009

ORATORIO TA' CARLO DIACONO DWAR SAN PAWL

Fl-okkażjoni tas-Sena Pawlina se ssir preżentazzjoni tal-*oratorio San Paolo Evengelizza i Maltesi* ta' Mro. Carlo Diacono b'versi ta' Mons. Prof. Giovanni Formosa. Il-preżentazzjoni tal-*oratorio*, li nkiteb fl-1913 fl-okkażjoni tal-Kungress Ewkaristiku Internazzjonali li sar f'Malta dik is-sena, se ssir nhar il-Ġimgħa, 8 ta' Mejju 2009, fil-KonKatidral ta' San Ġwann, fis-7.30pm.

L-*oratorio* jittratta r-rakkont tan-nawfraġju u l-miġja ta' San Pawl f'Malta, it-tweġiba tal-Maltin għat-tagħlim tiegħu u l-konverżjoni tagħhom għall-fidi Nisranija kif reġistrata fl-Atti tal-Appostli.

Din hija l-ewwel darba li dan l-*oratorio* se jiġi ppreżentat b'mod sħiħ. Meta nkiteb, 96 sena ilu, kien se jiġi esegwit fit-Teatru Rjal iżda nqalgħu xi diffikultajiet u dan ma sarx. Fl-1960 ġew ippreżentati xi siltiet minnu fl-Istitut Kattoliku, Floriana fl-okkażjoni taċ-Ċentinarju Pawlin, iżda mhux kollu.

Il-manuskritt tal-*oratorio*, li huwa fi tliet partijiet, hu konservat fil-Mużew tal-Katidral, Mdina. Il-manuskritt ngħata lill-Mużew minn Mro. Frank Diacono, iben il-kompożitur

L-*oratorio* se jsir bl-inizjattiva tal-Kumitat Inter-djoċesan għas-Sena Pawlina bil-kooperazzjoni u l-għajnuna tal-Ministeru tal-Edukazzjoni, Kultura, Żgħażagħ u Sport, il-Kapitlu Metropolitan, u l-Fundazzjoni tal-KonKatidral ta' San Ġwann.

Flimkien mal-Orkestra Filarmonika Nazzjonali (*leader* Marcelline Agius), se jieħdu sehem is-solisti Rosabelle Bianchi (sopran), Connie Frances Zerafa (contalto), Joseph Aquilina (tenur), Alfred Camilleri (baritonu), Anthony Montebello (baxx), u l-kor

Mirabitur immexxi minn Simone Attard.

Id-direzzjoni se tkun f'idejn Mons. Gwann Galea li sejjaħ l-*oratorio* bħala "ġawhra ta' xogħol mużikali marbut mas-sejħa tal-Maltin għall-fidi nisranija, imwassla lilna minn San Pawl." Mons. Galea qal li "kienet ħaġa xierqa li dan ix-xogħol monumentali ta' wieħed mill-aqwa kompożituri tagħna jiġi ppreżentat lill-poplu Malti fl-okkażjoni tas-Sena Pawlina."

Id-dħul għall-*oratorio* huwa bla ħlas u kulħadd hu mistieden.

25 ta' April 2009

Għeluq is-Sena Pawlina f'Ġunju 2009

IL-PAPA JAGĦŻEL IL-KARDINAL ANTONELLI BĦALA L-MIBGĦUT SPEĊJALI TIEGĦU GĦAL MALTA

Il-Mibgħut Speċjali tal-Papa għaċ-Ċelebrazzjoni Djoċesana li se ssir fid-29 ta' Ġunju fil-belt Valletta fl-għeluq tas-Sena Pawlina se jkun il-Kardinal Ennio Antonelli, President tal-Kunsill Pontifiċju għall-Familja.

L-aħbar ngħatat mis-Santa Sede llum, 25 ta' April 2009.

Il-Knisja Kattolika ddedikat Sena tal-Ġublew speċjali lill-Appostlu Pawlu mit-28 ta' Ġunju 2008 sad-29 ta' Ġunju 2009, fl-okkażjoni tal-bimillennju ta' twelidu, li l-istoriċi jgħidu li kienet bejn is-snin Sebgħa u 10 A.D.

Il-Kumitat Djoċesan inkarigat dwar l-organizzazzjoni taċ-ċelebrazzjonijiet tas-Sena Pawlina bħalissa qed jippjana ċ-ċerimonja tal-għeluq, li se ssir quddiem il-KonKatidral ta' San Ġwann, Valletta. Il-Kumitat qed iħejji wkoll għadd ta' attivitajiet li se jkunu minsuġin maż-żjara tad-Delegat tal-Papa u li se jwasslu għaċ-ċelebrazzjoni djoċesana fil-Belt. Il-programm sħiħ se jitħabbar fil-ġimgħat li ġejjin.

Il-Kardinal Antonelli twieled f'Todi, l-Umbrija (Italja), fit-18 Novembru 1936. Huwa ġie ordnat saċerdot għall-istess djoċesi fl-1960.

Huwa sar Isqof ta' Gubbio fil-25 ta' Mejju 1982 u ġie ordnat isqof fid-29 ta' Awissu. Huwa bena s-seminarju l-ġdid, iċ-ċentru pastorali djoċesan u d-dar għall-kleru. Fis-06 ta' Ottubru 1988 sar Arċisqof ta' Perugia-Cittâ della Pieve. Irriżenja minn din il-kariga

fis-26 ta' Mejju 1995 hekk kif ġie nominat Segretarju Ġenerali tal-Konferenza tal-Isqfijiet Taljani. Kellu uffiċċji diversi fi ħdan il-Konferenza tal-Isqfijiet Taljani u kien attiv f'ħidmiet ta' appostolat fl-isptar, fl-iskola u fl-università. Beda s-servizz ta' kappillan f'diversi oqsma. Ta bidu wkoll lil diversi gruppi impenjati f'ħidmiet soċjali/ kulturali.

Fil-21 ta' Marzu 2001 sar is-suċċessur tal-Kardinal Silvano Piovanelli bħala Arċisqof ta' Firenze.

Fil-21 ta' Ottubru 2003 il-Papa Ġwanni Pawlu II ħatru Kardinal, bit-titlu ta' S. Andrea delle Fratte.

Fis-07 ta' Ġunju 2008 sar il-President tal-Kunsill Pontifiċju tal-Familja.

25 ta' April 2009

DELEGAT ĠDID GĦALL-PARROĊĊI U KAPPILLAN ĠDID F'SAN ĠILJAN

Mons. Arċisqof Pawl Cremona O.P. innomina lil Fr. Ray Toledo bħala Delegat tiegħu għall-Parroċċi u lil Fr. Claude Portelli bħala Kappillan tal-Parroċċa ta' San Ġiljan, fejn se jkun is-suċċessur ta' Fr. Toledo.

Fr. Ray Toledo twieled Birkirkara fis-26 ta' Frar 1960 u ġie ordnat saċerdot fis-6 ta' Lulju 1990. Wara l-ordinazzjoni saċerdotali tiegħu, Fr. Ray ta servizz bħala Viċi-Parroku fl-Ibraġġ. F'Ottubru 1995, huwa ġie nominat Kappillan tal-Parroċċa tal-Qrendi waqt li fil-25 ta' Novembru 2003 sar Kappillan tal-Parroċċa ta' San Ġiljan.

Bħala Delegat tal-Arċisqof għall-Parroċċi Fr. Toledo se jkollu r-responsabbiltà li jsegwi l-ħajja u l-ħidma fil-parroċċi u jgħin il-parroċċi kif ikun meħtieġ, inkluż fit-tħejjija ta' pjani pastorali parrokkjali u t-twettieq tas-Sinodu fil-Parroċċi. Dover ieħor tad-Delegat għall-Parroċċi hu li jagħti pariri lill-Arċisqof dwar il-parroċċi skont il-bżonn.

Fr. Claude Portelli huwa minn tas-Sliema. Huwa twieled fis-06 ta' Awissu 1975 u ġie ordnat saċerdot fit-28 ta' Lulju 2002. Wara l-ordinazzjoni saċerdotali, Fr. Claude ta servizz pastorali l-ewwel fil-Parroċċa ta' Ħal Għaxaq fejn dam sa Lulju 2003 u mbagħad bħala Viċi-Parroku fil-Parroċċa ta' San Ġiljan.

25 ta' April 2009

TLUGĦ BIL-POLZA GĦAD-DĦUL FL-ISKEJJEL TAL-KNISJA

3,266 applikazzjoni għal 1,062 post

It-tlugħ bil-polza għad-dħul fil-Klassijiet Kindergarten One tal-Iskejjel tal-Knisja għas-sena skolastika li jmiss se jsir illum, it-Tnejn, 27 ta' April 2009, fil-Kurja tal-Arċisqof, Floriana, fit-3.00pm. It-tlugħ bil-polza għall-Klassijiet Kindergarten Two se jsir għada, it-Tlieta, waqt li dak għal Year One isir nhar l-Erbgħa, fl-istess post u ħin.

It-total ta' tfal li applikaw biex jidħlu fl-Iskejjel tal-Knisja f'Settembru li ġej huwa ta' 3,266. Il-postijiet disponibbli huma 1,062. Fl-2008 applikaw 3,214. Il-postijiet disponibbli kienu 1,063. Fl-2007 applikaw 3,328, fl-2006 applikaw 3,352, fl-2005 applikaw 3,436 u fl-2004 applikaw 3,771.

L-għadd ta' postijiet li hemm fil-livelli diversi, hu kif ġej:

KINDERGARTEN ONE: It-total tal-applikanti għal-livell Kindergarten One huwa 1,159 li minnhom se jidħlu 257. Dawn huma mqassmin hekk:
Każi Speċjali: Total ta' applikanti 91. Minnhom se jidħlu 50
Aħwa: 113
Tfal mid-Djar tal-Knisja: 0.
Dħul bil-polza: 116.

KINDERGARTEN TWO: It-total tal-applikanti għal-livell Kindergarten Two huwa 1,075, li minnhom se jidħlu 360. Dawn huma mqassmin hekk:
Każi Speċjali: Total ta' applikanti 128. Minnhom se jidħlu 67.

Aħwa: 124.
Tfal mid-Djar tal-Knisja: 2.
Dħul bil-polza: 167

YEAR ONE: It-total tal-applikanti għal Year One huwa 1,032, li minnhom se jidħlu 445. Dawn huma mqassmin hekk:
Każi Speċjali: Total ta' applikanti 166. Minnhom se jidħlu 86.
Aħwa: 126.
Tfal mid-Djar tal-Knisja: 3.
Dħul bil-polza: 230

27 ta' April 2009

ISQOF TALJAN SE JKELLEM LIS-SAĊERDOTI U L-LAJĊI MALTIN DWAR IL-MESSAĠĠ TA' SAN PAWL

Mons. Isqof Gianfranco Ravasi, li mill-2007 huwa President tal-Kongregazzjoni Pontifiċja tal-Kultura, President tal-Kummissjoni Pontifiċja tal-Ġid Kulturali tal-Knisja u President tal-Kummissjoni tal-Arkeoloġija Sagra, f'Mejju li ġej se jżur Malta biex ikellem lis-saċerdoti Maltin f'Kors ta' Aġġornament bit-tema: "L-Evenġelju ta' Pawlu – sfida għat-tiġdid" u jagħmel ukoll konferenza għal-lajċi.

Mons. Ravasi se jkellem lis-saċerdoti dwar San Pawl illum – messaġġ u attwalità; Djalogu mal-kultura fuq il-passi ta' San Pawl; Metodi ta' evanġelizzazzjoni f'San Pawl; Dwal minn San Pawl għal spiritwalità saċerdotali. L-interventi tiegħu se jkunu fis-27 u t-28 ta' Mejju, fis-Seminarju, Tal-Virtù.

Lil-lajċi, Mons. Ravasi se jkellimhom f'konferenza li l-Kummissjoni Kultura tal-Arċidjoċesi qed torganizza nhar l-Erbgħa, 27 ta' Mejju 2009, fis-7.00pm fl-Istitut Kattoliku, Floriana. Il-konferenza se tkun miftuħa għal kulħadd u se jkollha t-tema: "L-attwalità ta' San Pawl illum".

Mons. Ravasi ġie ordnat saċerdot fl-Arċidjoċesi ta' Milan fl-1966. Huwa professur tal-Esiġeżi Biblika fil-Fakultà tat-Teoloġija tal-Italja ta' fuq u membru tal-Kummissjoni Biblika Pontifiċja. Sa Settembru li għadda kien prefett tal-Bibjoteka Ambrożjana.

Mill-1980 sal-2002 Mons. Ravasi kien imexxi laqgħat ta' *Lectio Divina* fiċ-Ċentru tal-Istudji San Fedele, f'Milan, l-aktar fl-Avvent u fir-Randan. F'dawn il-laqgħat ikkummenta ftit ftit fuq il-

Kotba tat-Testment l-Antik u t-Testment il-Ġdid.

Fl-2007, kiteb il-meditazzjonijiet tal-Via Sagra fil-Kolossew.

L-Isqof Ravasi huwa magħruf ħafna wkoll għall-bosta kotba li kiteb u għas-sehem tiegħu fi programmi televiżivi. Għal ħafna snin ta wkoll kontribut fil-ġurnali *Il Sole 24 Ore* u *Avvenire*, kif ukoll fir-rivista *Famiglia Christiana* u *Jesus*.

27 ta' April 2009

L-ARĊISQOF IMEXXI PELLEGRINAĠĠ FIT-TURKIJA

Mons. Arċisqof Pawl Cremona O.P. se jmexxi Pellegrinaġġ tas-Sena Pawlina fit-Turkija, mit-30 ta' April sas-7 ta' Mejju 2009. Il-pellegrini se jżuru diversi postijiet li fihom mar u vvjaġġa San Pawl u li huma msemmijin fit-Testment il-Ġdid.

Il-pellegrinaġġ jinkludi Quddiesa fid-Dar tal-Madonna f'Efesu; żjarat fil-postijiet fejn hemm il-fdalijiet arkeoloġiċi ta' Efesu u tal-Knisja tal-Martirju tal-Appostlu San Filippu; il-Kappadoċja; Tarsu, fejn hemm il-Knisja ta' San Pawl u l-bir ta' San Pawl; il-Knisja ta' San'Antnin, f'Taksim, li hija mmexxija mill-Patrijiet Franġiskani Maltin.

Dan se jkun it-tieni pellegrinaġġ Malti fit-Turkija fis-Sena Pawlina. L-ewwel pellegrinaġġ sar mit-13 sal-20 ta' April u kien immexxi minn Mons. Isqof Mario Grech.

Pellegrinaġġ ieħor li mexxa Mons. Arċisqof fl-okkażjoni tas-Sena Pawlina kien lejn Ruma, f'Jannar li għadda.

Fil-ġimgħa li Mons. Arċisqof se jkun it-Turkija, id-dmirijiet ta' Arċisqof se jkunu f'idejn (*locum tenens*) Mons. Annetto Depasquale, Isqof Awżiljarju u Vigarju Ġenerali.

29 ta' April 2009