



## The Holy See

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### **ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI**

#### **TO THE BISHOPS OF MADAGASCAR**

**ON THEIR "AD LIMINA" VISIT** Saturday, 18 June 2005 Your Eminence,

*Dear Brothers in the Episcopate,* I greet you with joy while you are making your *ad limina* visit to the tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul and thereby expressing your communion with the Apostolic See. I thank the President of your Bishops' Conference, Archbishop Fulgence Rabeony of Toliara, for presenting the situation of the Church in your Country. I hope that the entire Malagasy people will live in God's peace and courageously persevere in building a society that is ever more respectful of the human being and his dignity! The celebration of Christ's Paschal Mystery has a central place in the life and ministry of the Bishop. In this Year of the Eucharist, I invite you in particular to renew your attachment to Christ who never ceases to give himself to us in this sacrament. By your exemplary life and by your teaching, actively collaborating with one another, lead the faithful towards friendship with Christ, encouraging them to be more and more generously charitable to their brethren! You will thus support the commitment of the lay people of your dioceses to public life, in fidelity to the vocation they have received. Indeed, by working to establish a more just society, fighting corruption, insecurity and all forms of exploitation of the poorest persons, they express the Church's concern for the true good of man. Our episcopal ministry demands that we help the faithful in our care to acquire an enlightened faith that is rooted in an intimate encounter with Christ. It is he who must be the measure of all things, making it possible to discern where truth is found so that we may confront the problems of our day with authentic fidelity to his teaching. In this perspective, the inculturation of the faith in the Malagasy culture remains an important goal. The acceptance of modernity does not exclude these Christian roots; on the contrary, it requires them. Relying on an enlightened faith is indispensable if genuine progress is to be made in the search for the unity of Christ's disciples. However, the creation of trusting, brotherly relations with each other must also provide for the requirements of the Catholic identity in truth, avoiding any gesture that not only might distress the faithful but also accommodate religious relativism. In your ministry, priests are your closest collaborators. Although they sometimes live in difficult conditions, many are generous and close to the people. It is your responsibility to sustain them in their difficulties, to be a father and a demanding guide for each one. Gospel proclamation requires high quality priests, from the intellectual as well as the spiritual and moral viewpoints, who bear witness throughout their lives to an unreserved attachment to Christ and his Church. I strongly urge you, therefore, to give priority to serious formation in your

seminaries and to seek to develop the means for the ongoing formation of your priests. As we come to the end of our meeting, I ask you to greet with affection the priests, men and women religious, catechists and all the faithful of your dioceses. I warmly encourage them in the witness of faith and charity which they render to Christ in conditions that are often very difficult, and I also appreciate the missionaries' generous work. May the Spirit of the Lord be their hope and obtain that each one contribute to the proclamation of the Gospel, in accordance with his or her vocation! As I entrust you to the motherly intercession of the Virgin Mary and to the prayers of your compatriot, Blessed Victoire Rasoamanarivo, I impart my Apostolic Blessing to you all.

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