



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY
OF THE HOLY FATHER BENEDICT XVI
TO CAMEROON AND ANGOLA
(MARCH 17-23, 2009)

FAREWELL CEREMONY

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER BENEDICT XVI

Nsimalen International Airport of Yaoundé
Friday, 20 March 2009

Mr President,
Distinguished Representatives of the Civil Authorities,
Cardinal Tumi,
My Brother Bishops,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As I prepare to leave Cameroon, having completed the first phase of my Apostolic Visit to Africa, I want to thank all of you for the generous reception you have given me during these days. The warmth of the African sun is reflected in the warmth of the hospitality that has been extended to me. I thank the President and the members of the Government for their courteous welcome. I thank my brother Bishops and all the Catholic faithful who have offered such an inspiring example of joyful and exuberant worship during the liturgies that we have experienced together. I am glad, too, that members of other Christian ecclesial communities were able to be present at some of our gatherings, and I renew my respectful greetings to them and their leaders. I would like to express my great appreciation for all the work undertaken by the civil authorities in order to ensure the smooth progress of my visit. But above all, I want to thank all those who have been praying so hard that this pastoral visit will bear fruit for the life of the Church in Africa. And I ask you to continue praying that the Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops will prove to

be a time of grace for the Church throughout the continent, a time of renewal and rededication to the mission to bring the healing message of the Gospel to a broken world.

Many of the scenes I have witnessed here will remain deeply etched on my memory. At the Cardinal Léger Centre, it was most moving to observe the care that is taken of the sick and the disabled, some of the most vulnerable members of our society. That Christ-like compassion is a sure sign of hope for the future of the Church and for the future of Africa.

My meeting with members of the Muslim community here in Cameroon was another highlight that will remain with me. As we continue on our journey towards greater mutual understanding, I pray that we will also grow in respect and esteem for one another, and strengthen our resolve to work together to proclaim the God-given dignity of the human person, a message that an increasingly secularized world needs to hear.

My principal reason for coming to Cameroon, of course, was to visit the Catholic community here. It gave me great joy to spend some fraternal moments with the Bishops, and to celebrate the Church's liturgy with so many members of the faithful. I came here specifically in order to share with you the historic moment of the promulgation of the Instrumentum Laboris for the Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops. Truly this is a moment of great hope for Africa and for the whole world.

People of Cameroon, I urge you to seize the moment the Lord has given you! Answer his call to bring reconciliation, healing and peace to your communities and your society! Work to eliminate injustice, poverty and hunger wherever you encounter it! And may God bless this beautiful country, "Africa in miniature", a land of promise, a land of glory. God bless you all!

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