



The Holy See

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

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!

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