



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO BENIN

18-20 NOVEMBER 2011

VISIT AT THE CATHEDRAL OF COTONOU

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

Cotonou

Friday, 18 November 2011

[Video]

Your Eminences,

Most Reverend Archbishop and Dear Brother Bishops,

Reverend Father Rector of the Cathedral,

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The ancient hymn, the *Te Deum*, which we have just sung, expresses our praise to the thrice-holy God who gathers us in this beautiful Cathedral of Our Lady of Mercy. We pay homage as well to the former Archbishops who are buried here: Archbishop Christoph Adimou and Archbishop Isidore de Sousa. They were heroic workers in the vineyard of the Lord, and their memory lives on in the hearts of Catholics and innumerable other citizens of Benin. These two Bishops were, each in his own way, pastors full of zeal and charity. They spent themselves, without counting the cost, in the service of the Gospel and of the people of God, especially the most vulnerable. You know well that Archbishop de Sousa was a friend of the truth and that he played a decisive role in your country's transition to democracy.

As we praise God for the marvels which he never ceases to bestow upon humanity, I invite you to meditate for a moment on his infinite mercy. The history of salvation, which culminates in the incarnation of Jesus and finds its fulfilment in the Paschal Mystery, is a radiant revelation of the

mercy of God. In the Son, the “Father of mercies” (2 *Cor* 1:3) is made visible; ever faithful to his fatherhood, he “leans down to each prodigal child, to each human misery, and above all to their moral misery, to their sins” (John Paul II, *Dives in Misericordia*, 6). Divine mercy consists not only in the remission of our sins; it also consists in the fact that God, our Father, redirects us, sometimes not without pain, affliction or fear on our part, to the path of truth and light, for he does not wish us to be lost (cf. *Mt* 18:14; *Jn* 3:16). This double expression of divine mercy shows how faithful God is to the covenant sealed with each Christian in his or her baptism. Looking back upon the personal history of each individual and of the evangelization of our countries, we can say together with the Psalmist, “I will sing of thy steadfast love, O Lord, for ever” (*Ps* 88:1).

The Virgin Mary experienced to the highest degree the mystery of divine love: “His mercy is on those who fear him from generation to generation” (*Lk* 1:50), she exclaimed in her *Magnificat*. By her yes to the call of God, she contributed to the manifestation of divine love in the midst of humanity. In this sense, she is the Mother of Mercy by her participation in the mission of her Son: she has received the privilege of being our helper always and everywhere. “By her manifold intercession, she continues to procure the gifts which assure our eternal salvation. By her motherly love, she cares for her Son’s sisters and brothers who still journey on earth surrounded by dangers and difficulties, until they are led into their blessed home” (*Lumen Gentium*, 62). Under the shelter of her mercy, deadened hearts are healed, the snares of the devil are thwarted and enemies are reconciled. In Mary, we have not only a model of perfection, but also one who helps us to realize communion with God and with our brothers and sisters. As Mother of Mercy, she is a sure guide to the disciples of her son who wish to be of service to justice, to reconciliation and to peace. She shows us, with simplicity and with a mother’s heart, the one Light and Truth: her Son, Jesus Christ who leads humanity to its full realization in the Father. Let us not be afraid to invoke, with confidence, her who ceaselessly dispenses to her children abundant divine graces:

O Mother of Mercy,

We salute you, Mother of the Redeemer;

We salute you, Glorious Virgin;

We salute you, our Queen!

O Queen of Hope,

Show us the face of your divine Son;

Guide us along the way of holiness;

Give us the joy of those who say Yes to God!

O Queen of Peace,

Fulfil the most noble aspirations of the young people of Africa;

Fill the hearts of those who thirst for justice, for peace and for reconciliation;

Fulfil the hopes of children, victims of hunger and of war!

O Queen of Peace,

Obtain for us a filial and fraternal love;

Grant that we may be friends of the poor and the little ones;

Obtain for the peoples of the earth a spirit of brotherhood!

Our Lady of Africa,

Obtain from your divine Son healing for the sick, consolation for the afflicted, pardon for sinners;

Intercede for Africa before your divine Son,

And obtain for all of humanity salvation and peace!

Amen.

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