



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO BENIN

18-20 NOVEMBER 2011

**CONSIGNING
OF THE POST-SYNODAL APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION
TO THE BISHOPS OF AFRICA**

ALLOCUTION OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

*Amitié Stadium, Cotonou
Sunday, 20 November 2011*

[Video]

*Your Eminences,
Dear Brother Bishops and Priests,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

In the course of this solemn liturgical celebration, we have given thanks to the Lord for the gift of the Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops, which met in October 2009 to discuss the theme: *The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, of Justice and Peace: 'You are the salt of the earth... you are the light of the world' (Mt 5:13-14)*. I thank all of the Synod Fathers for their contribution to this Assembly. My gratitude goes as well to the Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops, Archbishop Nikola Eterović, for the results achieved and for the greeting which he has just addressed in your name.

Yesterday I signed the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Africae Munus*. Today I am happy to offer it to each of the Particular Churches through you, the Presidents of the Episcopal Conferences of Africa – both national and regional - and through the Presidents of the Synods of the Eastern Catholic Churches. Upon the reception of this Exhortation, the phase of assimilation and application of its theological, ecclesiological, spiritual and pastoral data begins at the local level. This text seeks to promote, encourage and consolidate the various local initiatives already in

place. It seeks as well to inspire other initiatives for the upbuilding of the Catholic Church in Africa.

One of the first missions of the Church is the proclamation of Jesus Christ and his Gospel *ad gentes*, that is the evangelization of those at a distance from the Church in one way or another. I hope that this Exhortation will guide you in the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus in Africa. It is not just a message or a word. It is above all openness and adhesion to a person: Jesus Christ the incarnate Word. He alone possesses the words of life eternal (cf. *Jn* 6:68)! Following the example of Christ, all Christians are called to reflect the mercy of the Father and the light of the Holy Spirit. Evangelization presupposes and brings with it reconciliation and it promotes peace and justice.

Amada Igreja na África, torna-te cada vez mais o sal da terra, desta terra que Jesus Cristo abençoou com a sua presença quando, nela, encontrou refúgio. Sê o sal da terra africana, abençoada pelo sangue de tantos mártires, homens, mulheres e crianças, testemunhas da fé cristã até ao dom supremo da própria vida. Torna-te luz do mundo, luz da África que muitas vezes, no meio das provações, procura o caminho da paz e da justiça para todos os seus habitantes. A tua luz é Jesus Cristo, «*Luz do mundo*» (*Jo* 8, 12). Que Deus te abençoe, África bem amada!

[Dear Church in Africa, become ever more fully the salt of the earth – this earth which Jesus Christ blessed with his presence when he took refuge here! Be the salt of the African earth, blessed by the blood of so many matters – men, women and children, witnesses of the Christian faith even to the supreme gift of their lives! Become the light of the world, the light in Africa which seeks, amid tribulations, the path of peace and justice for all its citizens. Your light is Jesus, the Christ, “the Light of the World” (cf. *Jn* 8:12). May God bless you, dear Africa!]