



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE BISHOPS OF BURUNDI
ON THEIR "AD LIMINA" VISIT***

Saturday, 28 May 2005

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate,

I welcome you, Pastors of the Church in Burundi, with great joy. You have come on pilgrimage to Rome to pray at the tombs of the Apostles and meet the Successor of Peter and his collaborators. I hope that this experience of communion in charity will encourage you in your mission as servants of Christ's Gospel for the hope of the world.

I express my gratitude to Bishop Jean Ntagwarara of Bubanza, President of your Bishops' Conference, for the kind words he has just expressed in your name. They demonstrate the spiritual and missionary vitality of your diocesan communities, to whom, together with all Burundians, I address my affectionate greetings.

I would also like to commemorate with you Archbishop Michael A. Courtney, who was faithful to the point of laying down his life for the mission that the Holy Father had entrusted to him at the service of your beloved Country and the local Church.

In your quinquennial reports, you bring to the fore the Catholic Church's active role in furthering peace and reconciliation in the Country, especially during this election period. The sufferings endured in the dark time of war, during which, it must be said again, many Christians witnessed heroically to their faith, has not extinguished the desire to work for the brotherhood and unity of all, following Christ and in his Name.

I hope that the pastoral plan of action that has been worked out in this context, as well as the diocesan synods that will implement it locally, will contribute to proclaiming the Gospel, to healing

memories and hearts and to fostering solidarity among all Burundians, uprooting feelings of revenge and resentment and ceaselessly asking for forgiveness and reconciliation.

This year we are celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, promulgated by my Predecessor, Pope John Paul II. May it continue to be the charter of your commitment in the mission that has been entrusted to you, in communion with the other local Churches.

I encourage you in particular to renew your attention to all the faithful, so that they may live more and more intensely their Baptismal requirements. Many are suffering from great poverty and inner anguish, and are tempted to return to ancient practices that have not been purified by the Lord's Spirit or to turn to the sects. Take care of them, providing a sound Christian formation and making every effort for inculturation, especially in the area of the translation of the Bible and the texts of the Magisterium. This will enable them to "ever more fully assimilate the Gospel message, while remaining faithful to all authentic African values" (*Ecclesia in Africa*, n. 78).

At the end of our Meeting, dear Brothers in the Episcopate, I am granted the opportunity to give thanks for the apostolic work carried out by the indigenous and foreign priests and the men and women religious of your Dioceses, often in difficult conditions. I do not forget the catechists, precious assistants in the apostolate, as well as all the faithful who take part in the development of human beings and society, in the context of the Church's institutions for social advancement and its service in the world to education and health care.

As I invoke upon all of you and upon the members of your Dioceses the Holy Spirit who strengthens people in the faith, revives hope and sustains charity, I gladly impart to you an affectionate Apostolic Blessing.

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