



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE SYMPOSIUM
OF BISHOPS OF AFRICA AND EUROPE**

Saturday, 13 November 2004

*Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

1. I welcome you with great joy and warmly greet you all at the closing of the Symposium of Bishops of Africa and Europe. I greet especially the Presidents of the European Episcopal Conferences (CCEE) and of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM). I am grateful to them for the courteous words addressed to me on your behalf. I thank those whose efforts of promotion and collaboration have made this meeting a reality, aimed at increasing communion between the European and African Churches who are facing together issues of common interest. The theme itself of your Symposium says it: "*Communion and solidarity between Africa and Europe*".

2. Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate, I rejoice that you have felt the desire to deepen the bonds of *sacramental fraternity* that give life to your pastoral responsibility at the service of God and neighbour. It is a duty that must be expressed in constant collaboration in the style of "exchanging gifts". Speaking of this, I would like to recall the bond of deep understanding that in the third century linked Sts *Cornelius and Cyprian*, Bishops respectively of Rome and Carthage. In their letters it clearly emerges that the unity of the Church is built on the Eucharist and manifested in a constant search for brotherly and supportive cooperation.

This *style of fraternal love* serves as a meaningful witness that the Pastors of the Churches in Europe and Africa are called to offer in order to confront the great challenges that question the Christian faith in today's globalized society.

3. Your Symposium has supported encounter and dialogue between *the culture and mentality of Europe and that of Africa*. It is a question of employing the different cultural traditions in a complementary way, enabling the various Ecclesial Communities to face existential issues side-by-side. These topics include the conception of humanity and society and the settings in which pastoral service is carried out, together with evangelization and ecumenical and interreligious relations.

Furthermore, the awareness of carrying out the same mission at the service of the Gospel in Europe and Africa makes you all the more attentive to the expectations of the universal family of peoples.

4. However, to bring to fulfilment this urgent missionary service, in the first place it is essential to cultivate *prayer* and personal contact with Christ. Therefore, in these days you have emphasized the prayerful support of your respective Ecclesial Communities, especially those of many monasteries scattered on the two Continents. I also join in this unanimous request for heavenly aid, invoking upon you the protection of Mary Most Holy, Star of Evangelization, together with the special intercession of *St Augustine of Hippo*, who is, as it were, a bridge between Africa and Europe. Exactly today is the 1,650th anniversary of his birth, and in these days his relics are in Rome.

5. Lastly, welcoming the aspirations of the Post-Synodal Council, an expression of the hopes of African Pastors, I take the occasion to announce my intention to convoke a Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops.

I entrust this project to your prayers, warmly inviting you all to implore the Lord for the precious gift of communion and peace for the beloved Land of Africa.

Repeating my thanks for your visit, I cordially impart a special Blessing to you, the Bishops' Conferences for Africa and Europe, and to all of the inhabitants of these Continents.