

PRAYING WITH THE CHURCH 2007

Special edition to PRAYER AND SERVICE

July - September 2006

N. 3

PRESENTATION

The fact that the Lord knows how to work and to act even with inadequate instruments comforts me, and above all I entrust myself to your prayers.

I am not alone. I do not have to carry alone what in truth I could never carry alone. All the Saints of God are there to protect me, to sustain me and to carry me. And your prayers, my dear friends, your indulgence, your love, your faith and your hope accompany me.

Pray for me, that I may learn to love the Lord more and more. Pray for me, that I may learn to love his flock more and more – in other words, you, the holy Church, each one of you and all of you together. Pray for me, that I may not flee for fear of the wolves. Let us pray for one another, that the Lord will carry us and that we will learn to carry one another.

Right after his election as Vicar of Christ, Benedict XVI expressed three times his trust in the prayer of intercession of all the faithful for him. He did so during his first greeting from the benediction balcony of the Vatican Basilica on April 19th 2005 and during the solemn enthronement Mass on Saint Peter's Square on April 24th 2005.

The general and missionary intentions for 2007 which the Holy Father has been pleased to entrust to the Apostleship of Prayer remind us of this appeal which he made during the first days of his Papacy.

It is up to us to spread these intentions and make them the object of careful reflection which inspires conscious and responsible prayer not only in the members of the Apostleship of Prayer but in

the entire People of God, as his frequently evoked venerable predecessor John Paul II asked of us.

With this aim in view, besides this presentation, you will find in this special issue of Prayer & Service a commentary on each of the general and missionary intentions and, for each of the general intentions, suggestions for a liturgical celebration, questions for individual and group reflection and a prayer-meditation.

General Intentions

January

The truth of peace calls upon everyone to cultivate productive and sincere relationships; it encourages them to seek out and to follow the paths of forgiveness and reconciliation, to be transparent in their dealings with others, and to be faithful to their word. In a particular way, the followers of Christ, recognizing the insidious presence of evil and the need for that liberation brought by the divine Master, look to him with confidence, in the knowledge that "he committed no sin; no guile was found on his lips" (1P 2:22; cf. Is 53:9) (Benedict XVI, Message for the celebration of the World Day of Peace, 1 January 2006).

February

Today, absolute poverty continues to plague too many of the world's people. Too many do not have access to basic social services, namely: clear water, safe sanitation, health care, education, shelter or security. Too many people are unemployed or underemployed. Too many children, especially girls, lack educational opportunities. Too many adults, especially women, lack literacy skills and the chance for economic advancement and social

integration. Too many people suffer from the devastation of sickness and disease, particularly the effects of HIV/AIDS and malaria, which continue to have such devastating impact, especially in Africa and the Caribbean. Too many have little hope for a brighter future (Intervention of Msgr. Renato Martino at the World Summit on durable development, Johannesburg, Monday 2 September 2002).

March

Where do I find standards to live by, what are the criteria that govern responsible cooperation in building the present and the future of our world? On whom can I rely? To whom shall I entrust myself? Where is the One who can offer me the response capable of satisfying my heart's deepest desires?. The fact that we ask questions like these means that we realize our journey is not over until we meet the One who has the power to establish that universal Kingdom of justice and peace to which all people aspire, but which they are unable to build by themselves. Asking such questions also means searching for Someone who can neither deceive nor be deceived, and who therefore can offer a certainty so solid that we can live for it and, if need be, even die for it (Benedict XVI, Address Cologne - Poller Wiesen, Thursday, 18 August 2005).

April

All of you, my dear friends, have just invoked the entire host of Saints, represented by some of the great names in the history of God's dealings with mankind. In this way, I too can say with renewed conviction: I am not alone. I do not have to carry alone what in truth I could never carry alone. All the Saints of God are there to protect me, to sustain me and to carry me. And your prayers, my dear friends, your indulgence, your love, your faith and your hope accompany me. Indeed, the communion of Saints consists not only of the great men and women who went before us and whose names we know. All of us belong to the communion of Saints, we who have been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son

and of the Holy Spirit, we who draw life from the gift of Christ's Body and Blood, through which he transforms us and makes us like himself (Benedict XVI, Homily, Inaugural Mass, Saint Peter's Square, Sunday, 24 April 2005).

May

To seek and find Christ, the inexhaustible source of truth and life: the Word of God asks us to take up, at the beginning of the New Year, this never-ending journey of faith. We too ask Jesus: "Teacher, where do you stay?", and he answers us: "Come and see". For the believer it is always a ceaseless search and a new discovery, because Christ is the same yesterday, today and for ever, but we, the world and history, are never the same, and he comes to meet us to give us his communion and the fullness of life. Let us ask the Virgin Mary to help us to follow Jesus, savouring each day the joy of penetrating deeper and deeper into his mystery (Benedict XVI, Angelus, Sunday, 15 January 2006).

June

In the universal view, globalisation is this context in which the AOS must today offer its fraternal support to all seafarers and their families, whatever their culture, civilisation or religion and provide the tens of thousand Catholics of nearly all countries in the world, with the specific pastoral ministry which they have a right to. The "human beings" who are at the centre of the concerns of the Apostleship of the Sea, meeting here for its XXI → World Congress, are the millions of women and men around the world whose life and work are fundamentally linked with the Sea. Let us hope that at the end of this Congress, we shall know them better and that the Apostleship of the Sea will be better equipped to accompany them and to provide them with the spiritual (and sacramental for Catholics), practical and social support which they need (Archbishop Stephen Fumio Hamao, Opening Address, XXI World Congress of Apostolatus Maris, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 5 October 2002).

July

The direct duty to work for a just ordering of society, on the other hand, is proper to the lay faithful. As citizens of the State, they are called to take part in public life in a personal capacity. So they cannot relinquish their participation "in the many different economic, social, legislative, administrative and cultural areas, which are intended to promote organically and institutionally the *common good*". The mission of the lay faithful is therefore to configure social life correctly, respecting its legitimate autonomy and cooperating with other citizens according to their respective competencies and fulfilling their own responsibility. Even if the specific expressions of ecclesial charity can never be confused with the activity of the State, it still remains true that charity must animate the entire lives of the lay faithful and therefore also their political activity, lived as "social charity" (Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter "Deus Caritas Est" 29, 25 December 2005).

August

We are living in alienation, in the salt waters of suffering and death; in a sea of darkness without light. The net of the Gospel pulls us out of the waters of death and brings us into the splendour of God's light, into true life. It is really true: as we follow Christ in this mission to be fishers of men, we must bring men and women out of the sea that is salted with so many forms of alienation and onto the land of life, into the light of God. It is really so: the purpose of our lives is to reveal God to men. And only where God is seen does life truly begin. Only when we meet the living God in Christ do we know what life is. We are not some casual and meaningless product of evolution. Each of us is the result of a thought of God. Each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary. There is nothing more beautiful than to be surprised by the Gospel, by the encounter with Christ. There is nothing more beautiful than to know him and to speak to others of our friendship with him. The task of

the shepherd, the task of the fisher of men, can often seem wearisome. But it is beautiful and wonderful, because it is truly a service to joy, to God's joy which longs to break into the world (Benedict XVI, Homily Inaugural Mass, Saint Peter's Square, Sunday, 24 April 2005).

September

You have desired to set out on the European ecumenical pilgrimage, which will culminate in the meeting at Sibiu, Romania, in September 2007, from this very spot: Rome, where the Apostles Peter and Paul preached and were martyred. This is all the more significant because the Apostles first proclaimed to us that Gospel which we are called as Christians to proclaim and witness to in Europe today. In order to make this proclamation more effective, we wish to continue our courageous journey in search of full communion. The theme you have chosen for this spiritual programme - "*The light of Christ enlightens all: The hope of renewal and unity in Europe*" - demonstrates that this is Europe's true priority: to work to make Christ's light radiate and illuminate with renewed energy the steps of the European Continent at the beginning of the new Millennium.

I hope that Christ's light will illuminate every stage of this pilgrimage and that the next European Ecumenical Assembly will help make the Christians of our countries more aware of their duty to witness to the faith in today's cultural context, often marked by relativism and indifference. This is an indispensable service to offer to the European Community which has extended its frontiers in recent years (Benedict XVI, Address to European Ecumenical Delegates, Thursday, 26 January 2006).

October

Catholics in your region constitute a minority. This presents many challenges which require dedication on the part of the Church to tend the flock effectively and, at the same time, remain faithful to

her missionary commitment. For this reason it is essential that the bishops promote the crucial work of catechesis in order to ensure that God's people are truly prepared to witness by word and deed to the authentic teaching of the Gospel. As I look at the Church in Africa, and at all that has been accomplished there over the last century, I give thanks to our Heavenly Father for the many priests, religious and lay men and women who have given their lives to this noble task (Benedict XVI, Address to the bishops of South Africa, Botswana, Swaziland, Namibia and Lesotho, on their "Ad Limina Apostolorum" visit, Friday, 10 June 2005).

November

The contemporary world is marked by the process of secularization. Through complex cultural and social events, it has not only claimed a just autonomy for science and the organization of society, but has all too often also obliterated the link between temporal realities and their Creator, even to the point of neglecting to safeguard the transcendent dignity of human beings and respect for human life itself. Today, however, secularization in the form of radical secularism no longer satisfies the more aware and alert minds. This means that possible and perhaps new spaces are opening up for a profitable dialogue with society and not only with the faithful, especially on important themes such as those relating to life (Benedict XVI, Address to the participants at the 20th International Congress of the Pontifical Council for Health Pastoral Care on the theme of the Human Genome, Saturday, 19 November 2005).

December

Brother Bishops, I share your deep concern over the devastation caused by AIDS and related diseases. I especially pray

for the widows, the orphans, the young mothers and all those whose lives have been shattered by this cruel epidemic. I urge you to continue your efforts to fight this virus which not only kills but seriously threatens the economic and social stability of the Continent. The Catholic Church has always been at the forefront both in prevention and in treatment of this illness. The traditional teaching of the Church has proven to be the only failsafe way to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS. For this reason, "the companionship, joy, happiness and peace which Christian marriage and fidelity provide, and the safeguard which chastity gives, must be continuously presented to the faithful, particularly the young" (*Ecclesia in Africa*, 116) (Benedict XVI, Address to the bishops of South Africa, Botswana, Swaziland, Namibia and Lesotho, on their "Ad Limina Apostolorum" visit, Friday, 10 June 2005).

Mission Intentions

January

I was moved by your words, Your Excellency, stressing the positive role played by the Catholic Church in the process of national reconstruction. The Church, in fact, is deeply involved in the process of reconciliation and forgiveness, through the statements of her Bishops, whom I met here recently, through her numerous institutions in the areas of charitable aid, education and health care, as well as through her pastoral care that is dedicated to healing hearts and helping people rediscover the joy of living together as brothers and sisters (Benedict XVI, Address to the new Ambassador of the Republic of Rwanda to the Holy See, Thursday, 16 June 2005).

February

First and foremost, the Holy See Delegation is concerned

with the threat posed by HIV and AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria to the most fundamental and sacred right – that of human life itself. This exercise of this right to life is most tenuous among populations in the least developed countries of the world, among those ravaged by war, wide-scale conflict and violence; those oppressed by racial or ethnic discrimination, forced migration; those who are victims of human trafficking and domestic violence. These same persons often find themselves equally vulnerable to infection with or the broader-based family-related, social, and economic impact produced by these three major pandemics (Mons. Silvano Maria Tomasi, C.S., Statement at the 61st session of the commission of the United Nations on human rights on access to medication, Geneva, Tuesday, 29 March 2005).

March

Finally, catechesis is closely linked with the responsible activity of the Church and of Christians in the world. A person who has given adherence to Jesus Christ by faith and is endeavouring to consolidate that faith by catechesis needs to live in communion with those who have taken the same step. Catechesis runs the risk of becoming barren if no community of faith and Christian life takes the catechumen in at a certain stage of his catechesis. That is why the ecclesial community at all levels has a twofold responsibility with regard to catechesis: it has the responsibility of providing for the training of its members, but it also has the responsibility of welcoming them into an environment where they can live as fully as possible what they have learned (John-Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation "Catechesi Tradendae" 24, 16 October 1979).

April

The proper formation of Priests and Religious is absolutely

integral to successful evangelization (cf. *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 2). I know you have been addressing this matter with due attention for quite some time. Your concern for the human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral development of your seminarians, as well as men and women Religious in training, will bear much fruit in your Dioceses. I encourage you therefore to ensure careful selection of candidates, to supervise your seminaries personally and to provide regular programmes of ongoing formation so necessary for deepening priestly and religious identity and enriching joyful commitment to celibacy. Finally in this regard, I offer my prayers of deep gratitude for those who serve in seminaries and houses of formation. Please let them know that the Holy Father thanks them for their generosity (Benedict XVI, Address to the Bishops of the Episcopal Conference of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands on their "Ad Limina Apostolorum" visit, Saturday 25 June 2005).

May

The seminary years are devoted to formation and discernment. Formation, as you well know, has different strands which converge in the unity of the person: it includes human, spiritual and cultural dimensions. Its deepest goal is to bring the student to an intimate knowledge of the God who has revealed his face in Jesus Christ. For this, in-depth study of Sacred Scripture is needed, and also of the faith and life of the Church in which the Scripture dwells as the Word of life. This must all be linked with the questions prompted by our reason and with the broader context of modern life. Such study can at times seem arduous, but it is an indispensable part of our encounter with Christ and our vocation to proclaim him. All this is aimed at shaping a steady and balanced personality, one capable of receiving validly and fulfilling responsibly the priestly mission (Benedict XVI, Meeting with seminarians, Cologne, Friday, 19 August 2005).

June

The Bishop, in his pastoral life as in exercising his ministry, must put into practice a gift of the Holy Spirit which is not only destined to the Christian community but concerns the whole of society called by God to conversion of the heart, to a deepening of the life of faith, of hope and charity. During the difficult times characterised by social crisis (extremism, terrorism) which some of our countries are going through, the Bishop must be for all the servant of hope: the wisdom of his advice, serenity and patience in suffering make him the rock on which men and women put to the test can find a grip to hold onto. Our presence in the land of Islam will be possible, desired and authentic only if we are humble servants of the gratuitous love of Jesus of whom we are the disciples (H.E. Most Rev. Alphonse Georger, Bishop of Oran, (Algeria), Intervention at the X Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, 30 September-27 October 2001).

July

Since they are members of the Church by virtue of their Baptism, all Christians share responsibility for missionary activity. "Missionary cooperation" is the expression used to describe the sharing by communities and individual Christians in this right and duty. Missionary cooperation is rooted and lived, above all, in personal union with Christ. Only if we are united to him as the branches to the vine (cf. Jn 15:5) can we produce good fruit. Sharing in the universal mission therefore is not limited to certain specific activities, but is the sign of maturity in faith and of a Christian life that bears fruit. In this way, individual believers extend the reach of their charity and show concern for those both far and near. They pray for the missions and missionary vocations. They help missionaries and follow their work with interest. And when missionaries return, they welcome them with the same joy with which the first Christian communities heard from the apostles the marvellous things which God had wrought through their preaching (cf. Ac 14:27) (John-Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio* 77, 7 December 1990).

August

Historically, in ways that are certainly different but not in opposition to one another, China and the Catholic Church are two of the most ancient "institutions" in existence and operating on the world scene: both, though in different domains – one in the political and social, the other in the religious and spiritual – encompass more than a thousand million sons and daughters. It is no secret that the Holy See, in the name of the whole Catholic Church and, I believe, for the benefit of the whole human family, hopes for the opening of some form of dialogue with the Authorities of the People's Republic of China. Once the misunderstandings of the past have been overcome, such a dialogue would make it possible for us to work together for the good of the Chinese people and for peace in the world (John Paul II, Message to the participants in the International Conference commemorating the fourth century of the arrival in Beijing of Father Matteo Ricci, Vatican, 24 October 2001).

September

Only when we meet the living God in Christ do we know what life is. We are not some casual and meaningless product of evolution. Each of us is the result of a thought of God. Each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary. There is nothing more beautiful than to be surprised by the Gospel, by the encounter with Christ. There is nothing more beautiful than to know him and to speak to others of our friendship with him. The task of the shepherd, the task of the fisher of men, can often seem wearisome. But it is beautiful and wonderful, because it is truly a service to joy, to God's joy which longs to break into the world (Benedict XVI, Homily, Mass for the beginning of the Petrine Ministry of the Bishop of Rome, Saint Peter's Square, Sunday, 24 April 2005).

October

Since they are members of the Church by virtue of their Baptism, all Christians share responsibility for missionary activity. "Missionary cooperation" is the expression used to describe the sharing by communities and individual Christians in this right and duty. Missionary cooperation is rooted and lived, above all, in personal union with Christ. Only if we are united to him as the branches to the vine (cf. Jn 15:5) can we produce good fruit. Through holiness of life every Christian can become a fruitful part of the Church's mission. [...] Sharing in the universal mission therefore is not limited to certain specific activities, but is the sign of maturity in faith and of a Christian life that bears fruit (John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio* 77, 7 December 1990).

November

Providence has allowed me to pay two visits to the country that you represent. I was able to become acquainted with the progress and the freedom and well-being achieved by a young and dynamic society. However, I also perceived the disappointment of many in observing that the peninsula, inhabited by a single people, is obliged to live in painful division. The enduring sentiments of hostility and opposition between the two nations are undeniably a cause of concern, but it is a cause of hope to know that there is a firm desire to alleviate tensions through dialogue and encounters, to smooth out the differences and find a common ground for fruitful understanding (John Paul II, Address to the ambassador of Korea accredited to the Holy See, Friday, 4 July 2003).

December

The fact that the Church in Asia is a "little flock" (Lk 12:32) must not lead to discouragement, since the effectiveness of evangelization does not depend on numbers. After Pentecost, the Apostles and a limited number of disciples were sent out to preach the Gospel to the whole world (cf. Ac 2:1 ff.). Through the parables of the yeast (cf. Mt 13:33) and of the mustard seed (cf. Lk 13:19;

17:6), Jesus himself teaches that what is small and hidden to human eyes, thanks to God's almighty intervention, can obtain un hoped for results. Faith in divine Providence, therefore, must constantly inspire the missionary action of the Church in Asia, the Continent of hope. May Christians in Asia continue to follow Christ faithfully; may they continue, with the greatest possible dedication, to spread the gift of his peace and love (John Paul II, Address to the participants in the eighth meeting of the Post-Synodal Council of the General Secretariat of the Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops, Friday, 19 November 2004).

Aloys Van Doren, S.J.

JANUARY

JANUARY

That in our time, unfortunately marked by many episodes of violence, the Pastors of the Church may continue to indicate the way of peace and understanding among peoples.

4. Seen in this way, peace appears as a heavenly gift and a divine grace which demands at every level the exercise of the highest responsibility: that of conforming human history—in truth, justice, freedom and love—to the divine order. Whenever there is a loss of fidelity to the transcendent order, and a loss of respect for that "grammar" of dialogue which is the universal moral law written on human hearts (cf. John Paul II, *Address to the Fiftieth General Assembly of the United Nations* (5 October 1995), No. 3), whenever the integral development of the person and the protection of his fundamental rights are hindered or denied, whenever countless people are forced to endure intolerable injustices and inequalities, how can we hope that the good of peace will be realized? The essential elements which make up the truth of that good are missing. Saint Augustine described peace as *tranquillitas ordinis* (*De Civitate Dei*, XIX, 13), the tranquillity of order. By this, he meant a situation which ultimately enables the truth about man to be fully respected and realized.

5. Who and what, then, can prevent the coming of peace? Sacred Scripture, in its very first book, *Genesis*, points to the lie told at the very beginning of history by the animal with a forked tongue, whom the Evangelist John calls "the father of lies" (Jn 8:44). Lying is also one of the sins spoken of in the final chapter of the last book of the Bible, *Revelation*, which bars liars from the heavenly Jerusalem: "outside are... all who love falsehood" (22:15). Lying is linked to the tragedy of sin and its perverse consequences, which have had, and continue to have, devastating effects on the lives of individuals and nations. We need but think of the events of the past century, when aberrant ideological and political systems wilfully twisted the truth and brought about the exploitation and murder of an appalling number of men and women, wiping out entire families

and communities. After experiences like these, how can we fail to be seriously concerned about lies in our own time, lies which are the framework for menacing scenarios of death in many parts of the world. Any authentic search for peace must begin with the realization that the problem of truth and untruth is the concern of every man and woman; it is decisive for the peaceful future of our planet.

6. Peace is an irrepressible yearning present in the heart of each person, regardless of his or her particular cultural identity. Consequently, everyone should feel committed to service of this great good, and should strive to prevent any form of untruth from poisoning relationships. All people are members of one and the same family. An extreme exaltation of differences clashes with this fundamental truth. We need to regain an awareness that we share a common destiny which is ultimately transcendent, so as to maximize our historical and cultural differences, not in opposition to, but in cooperation with, people belonging to other cultures. These simple truths are what make peace possible; they are easily understood whenever we listen to our own hearts with pure intentions. Peace thus comes to be seen in a new light: not as the mere absence of war, but as a harmonious coexistence of individual citizens within a society governed by justice, one in which the good is also achieved, to the extent possible, for each of them. The truth of peace calls upon everyone to cultivate productive and sincere relationships; it encourages them to seek out and to follow the paths of forgiveness and reconciliation, to be transparent in their dealings with others, and to be faithful to their word. In a particular way, the followers of Christ, recognizing the insidious presence of evil and the need for that liberation brought by the divine Master, look to him with confidence, in the knowledge that "he committed no sin; no guile was found on his lips" (1P 2:22; cf. Is 53:9). Jesus defined himself as the Truth in person, and, in addressing the seer of the Book of Revelation, he states his complete aversion to "every one who loves and practises falsehood" (Rv 22:15). He has disclosed the full truth about humanity and about human history. The power of his grace

makes it possible to live "in" and "by" truth, since he alone is completely true and faithful. Jesus is the truth which gives us peace.

(...)

16. At the conclusion of this Message, I would like to address a particular word to all believers in Christ, inviting them once again to be attentive and generous disciples of the Lord. When we hear the Gospel, dear brothers and sisters, we learn to build peace on the truth of a daily life inspired by the commandment of love. Every community should undertake an extensive process of education and witness aimed at making everyone more aware of the need for a fuller appreciation of the truth of peace. At the same time I ask for an increase of prayers, since peace is above all a gift of God, a gift to be implored incessantly. By God's help, our proclamation and witness to the truth of peace will be all the more convincing and illuminating. With confidence and filial abandonment let us lift up our eyes to Mary, Mother of the Prince of Peace. At the beginning of this New Year, let us ask her to help all God's People, wherever they may be, to work for peace and to be guided by the light of the truth that sets man free (cf. Jn 8:32). Through Mary's intercession, may all mankind grow in esteem for this fundamental good and strive to make it ever more present in our world, and, in this way, to offer a safer and more serene future to generations yet to come.

Benedict XVI
Message for the World Day of Peace
8 December 2005

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LITURGY – CELEBRATION

EUCCHARIST:

Mass for Peace and Justice (RM, Masses for various needs).

CELEBRATION OF THE WORD:

First reading: Great shall be his power and the peace will have no end: Is 9:2-7.

Responsorial Psalm: You, Lord, are our peace: Ps 84(85).

Second reading: May God's peace guard your hearts: Ph 4:6-9.

Gospel: Happy the peacemakers, they shall be called sons of God: Mt 5:1-12.

QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP REFLECTION

1. In your opinion, what are some of the steps towards peace?
2. Which is the most important one?
3. Why is it that peace is so difficult to attain?

PRAYER - MEDITATION

The descendant of David
Isaiah 11:1-10

A shoot will spring from the stock of Jesse,
a new shoot will grow from his roots.
On him will rest the spirit of Yahweh,
the spirit of wisdom and insight,
the spirit of counsel and power,
the spirit of knowledge and fear of Yahweh:
his inspiration will lie in fearing Yahweh.
His judgement will not be by appearances.
his verdict not given on hearsay.
He will judge the weak with integrity
and give fair sentence for the humblest in the land.
He will strike the country with the rod of his mouth
and with the breath of his lips bring death to the wicked.

Uprightness will be the belt around his waist,
and constancy the belt about his hips.

The wolf will live with the lamb,
the panther lie down with the kid,
calf, lion and fat-stock beast together,
with a little boy to lead them.
The cow and the bear will graze,
their young will lie down together,
The lion will eat hay like the ox.
The infant will play over the den of the adder;
the baby will put his hand into the viper's lair.
No hurt, no harm will be done
on all my holy mountain,
for the country will be full of knowledge of Yahweh
as the waters cover the sea.

MISSION INTENTION

That the Church in Africa may become a constantly more authentic witness of the Good News of Christ and be committed, in every Nation, to the promotion of reconciliation and peace.

Mr Ambassador,

I am pleased to welcome you, Your Excellency, on the occasion of the presentation of the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Rwanda to the Holy See. Thank you for conveying to me the greetings of H.E. Mr Paul Kagamé, President of the Republic. I would be grateful if you would kindly reciprocate by expressing to him my best wishes for his mission and for the entire Rwandan People.

You emphasize, Mr Ambassador, your Government's willingness to continue developing the relations that exist between the Republic of Rwanda and the Holy See; the 40th anniversary of these established relations was celebrated in 2004. This collaboration is based on the common desire, with respect for the prerogatives of each one, that all the inhabitants, without exception, be offered conditions of coexistence that will enable them to take an ever greater part in the human and spiritual progress of their Country, scarred by its recent history.

Ceremonies to commemorate the genocide took place last year, reminding Rwandans and the whole world of the terrible tragedy that occurred in 1994, which rent the social, economic, cultural and family fabric of the country. Today, we must feel called to work without respite for peace and reconciliation, to prepare a serene future for the present and future generations!

This implies, first of all, a conscientious self-examination regarding the profound causes of this tragedy, to plant in memories and in hearts the imperative duty of learning to live as brothers and sisters and rejecting barbarity in all its forms. This also requires the guarantee of conditions of security that allow the democratic

institutions to function harmoniously. Likewise, it is important to guarantee to all citizens their basic rights. They must be given access to an equitable justice that serves the truth and banishes fear, revenge, impunity and inequality in the near future.

It is to be hoped that the efforts being made to establish real, reconciliatory justice will consolidate national unity and determine political, economic and social decisions that will encourage the ongoing development of the Country, the recovery of dignity for all its inhabitants and an increase in stability for the Great Lakes Region.

I was moved by your words, Your Excellency, stressing the positive role played by the Catholic Church in the process of national reconstruction. The Church, in fact, is deeply involved in the process of reconciliation and forgiveness, through the statements of her Bishops, whom I met here recently, through her numerous institutions in the areas of charitable aid, education and health care, as well as through her pastoral care that is dedicated to healing hearts and helping people rediscover the joy of living together as brothers and sisters.

In this Year of the Eucharist, the faithful and their Pastors are particularly focused on their ability to celebrate the Sacrament of unity on Sunday. Here, they find new strength to become artisans of communion and hope.

As I reminded the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, the Church "asks no privileges for herself but only the legitimate conditions of freedom to carry out her mission" (*Address to the Diplomatic Corps, 12 May 2005*). It is to be hoped that dialogue, followed-up with the Authorities of your Country, will help people perceive more and more clearly the desire of the Catholic Church to take an active part in the human and spiritual development of all Rwandans.

These bonds of trusting collaboration are necessary to the Church if she is to exercise her mission ever more effectively and work for brotherhood and peace, with respect for the specific features of the human and religious communities that make up the Nation. The organization of Congresses on education and health care witness to the common concern to build a more united Nation, with respect for the mission of each one, in which there is greater solidarity.

At the time when you are inaugurating your mission to the Holy See, I offer you my very best wishes for its success. You may rest assured that with my collaborators you will always find the attentive and understanding welcome you may need.

Your Excellency, I wholeheartedly invoke upon you, your family, your collaborators and all the Rwandan People and their Leaders, an abundance of divine Blessings.

Benedict XVI
Address to H.E. Mr Joseph Bonesha
new Ambassador of the Republic of Rwanda to the Holy See
16 June 2005

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FEBRUARY

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That the goods of the earth, given by God for all men, may be used wisely and according to criteria of justice and solidarity.

*Your Excellencies, Prime Ministers,
Mr President,
Mr Director General,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen!*

I am pleased to welcome the representatives of the Member States, on the occasion of the Thirty-third Conference of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization. This is our first meeting and it allows me to see at close hand your efforts in the service of a great ideal: that of liberating humanity from hunger. To all I offer a respectful greeting, particularly the Director General, Mr Jacques Diouf. I offer him my heartfelt good wishes at the beginning of his new mandate.

Today's meeting is an appropriate occasion to express my sincere appreciation for the programmes which FAO, in its diverse agencies, has carried out for the past sixty years, defending with competence and professionalism the *cause of man*, beginning precisely with the basic right of each person to be "free of hunger". Humanity is presently experiencing a worrisome paradox: side by side with ever new and positive advances in the areas of the economy, science and technology, we are witnessing a continuing increase of poverty. I am certain that the experience which you have accumulated in these years can help to develop a method adequate to the task of combating hunger and poverty, one shaped by that concrete realism which has always characterized the work of your distinguished Organization.

In recent years FAO has worked for broader cooperation and has seen in the "dialogue of cultures" a specific means of ensuring greater development and secure access to food. Today more than ever, there is a need for concrete, effective instruments for

eliminating the potential for conflict between different cultural, ethnic and religious visions. There is a need to base international relations on respect for the person and on the cardinal principles of peaceful coexistence, fidelity to commitments undertaken and mutual acceptance by the peoples who make up the one human family. There is likewise a need to recognize that technical progress, necessary as it is, is not everything. True progress is that alone which integrally safeguards the dignity of the human being and which enables each people to share its own spiritual and material resources for the benefit of all.

Here I wish to mention the importance of helping native communities, all too often subjected to undue appropriations aimed at profit, as your Organization recently pointed out in its *Guidelines on the Right to Food*. Also, it must not be forgotten that, while some areas are subject to international measures and controls, millions of people are condemned to hunger, even outright starvation, in areas where violent conflicts are taking place, conflicts which public opinion tends to neglect because they are considered *internal, ethnic* or *tribal*. Yet these conflicts have seen human lives systematically eliminated, while people have been uprooted from their lands and at times forced, in order to flee certain death, to leave their precarious settlements in refugee camps.

An encouraging sign is the initiative of FAO to convene its Member States to discuss the issue of agrarian reform and rural development. This is not a new area, but one in which the Church has always shown interest, out of particular concern for small rural farmers who represent a significant part of the active population especially in developing countries. One course of action might be to ensure that rural populations receive the resources and tools which they need, beginning with education and training, as well as organizational structures capable of safeguarding small family farms and cooperatives (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 71).

In a few days many of the participants in this Conference will be meeting in Hong Kong for negotiations on international

commerce, particularly with regard to farm products. The Holy See is confident that a sense of responsibility and solidarity with the most disadvantaged will prevail, so that narrow interests and the logic of power will be set aside. It must not be forgotten that the vulnerability of rural areas has significant repercussions on the subsistence of small farmers and their families if they are denied access to the market. A consistent course of action would call for recognizing the essential role of the rural family as a guardian of values and a natural agent of solidarity in relationships between the generations. Consequently, support should also be given to the role of rural women and at the same time to children for whom not only nutrition but also basic education must be assured.

Ladies and Gentlemen, conscious of the great complexity of your work, I nonetheless offer these reflections for your consideration, since I am convinced that the hearts of all need to be increasingly open to the many people in our world who lack their daily bread. The work of this Conference will show the strength of the growing conviction that what is needed is a courageous struggle against hunger. May Almighty God illuminate your deliberations and grant you the strength needed to persevere in your indispensable efforts to serve the common good. To all I renew my cordial good wishes for the full success of the work of your Conference.

Benedict XVI
Address to the participants in the
Thirty-Third Conference of the FAO
24 November 2005

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LITURGY – CELEBRATION

EUCCHARIST:

Mass for after the harvest (RM, Masses for various needs).

CELEBRATION OF THE WORD:

First reading: Remember the Lord who has given you the riches of the earth: Dt 8:7-18.

Responsorial Psalm: Your name is great, Lord, throughout the earth: Ps 8.

Second reading: We cannot take the goods of this world to the other world: 1Tm 6:6-11.17-19.

Gospel: Use the goods of the earth without anxiety: Lk 12:15-21.

QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP REFLECTION

1. Why is it that the goods of the earth are so badly distributed?
2. What needs to be done to remedy this?
3. How do you manifest your solidarity with the most deprived?

PRAYER - MEDITATION

The creation of heaven and earth

Genesis 1:20-31

God said, "Let the waters be alive with a swarm of living creatures, and let birds wing their way above the earth across the vault of heaven. And so it was. God created great sea-monsters and all the creatures that glide and teem in the waters in their own species, and winged birds in their own species. God saw that it was good. God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the waters of the seas; and let the birds multiply on land". Evening came and morning came: the fifth day.

God said, "Let the earth produce every kind of living creature in its own species: cattle, creeping things and wild animals of all kinds. And so it was. God made wild animals in their own species, and cattle in theirs, and every creature that crawls along the earth in its own species. God saw that it was good.

God said, "Let us make man in our own image, in the likeness of ourselves, and let them be masters of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven, the cattle, all the wild animals and all the creatures that creep along the ground".

God created man in the image of himself,
in the image of God he created him,
male and female he created them.

God blessed them, saying to them, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and subdue it. Be masters of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven and all the living creatures that move on earth". God also said, "Look, to you I give all the seedbearing plants everywhere on the surface of the earth, and all the trees with seedbearing fruit; this will be your food. And to all the wild animals, all the birds of heaven and all the living creatures that creep along the ground, I

give all the foliage of the plants as their food". And so it was. God saw all he had made, and indeed it was very good. Evening came and morning came: the sixth day.

MISSION INTENTION

That the fight against diseases and great epidemics in the Third World may find, in the spirit of solidarity, ever more generous collaboration on the part of the governments of all Nations.

Mr President,

I am pleased to convey to the World Health Organization the cordial greetings of the new Pope Benedict XVI. His Holiness is deeply concerned by the world's health problems. He offers all his support and help to the global effort to obtain health for all, especially the most defenceless, with priority to topics that cause us the greatest concern today and to the health of mothers and children above all.

Unfortunately, diseases and infectious diseases in particular are most virulent in the poorest countries which, precisely because of their poverty, have no resources with which to obtain the medicines that thanks to technological progress could easily provide a cure for some of them.

As a matter of fact, infectious illnesses account for the death of 17 million people each year, 90 percent of whom live in developing countries.

For example, 95 percent of those infected with AIDS have no money to pay for antiretrovirals. Today on the market of some of these countries it is impossible even to find the medicines necessary

to treat the so-called "diseases of the poor", such as, for example, tuberculosis, malaria, smallpox, dengue haemorrhagic fever, leishmaniasis, certain forms of meningitis, sleeping sickness, etc.

Recently, at the end of the 20th century, only 13 of the 1,223 new medicines put on the market in the 22 years between 1975 and 1997 were for the treatment of infectious tropical diseases. The total cost of medicines throughout the world is estimated at between \$50 and \$60 billion (U.S.) annually, and only 0.2 percent of this sum is allocated to the treatment of respiratory ailments, tuberculosis and diarrhoea infections.

These diseases are thought to be the cause of 18 percent of the deaths across the world (cf. *Médecins sans frontière*, www.accessmed.sf.org).

Together with these health problems, with special reference to mother and child health, it is appalling to note that out of 211 million new human beings conceived, there are 46 million induced abortions, 32 million die prematurely or at birth, and only 133 million are born and survive (WHO, *The World Health Report 2005, Make every mother and child count*, 48-52).

Mr President, aware in the Holy See of these and similar problems, Pope John Paul II set up "The Good Samaritan" Foundation to help the neediest sick in the world. The new Pope Benedict XVI has been pleased to ratify this Foundation.

We are complying with its initial aim by purchasing medicines for the neediest. To date, we have been able to assist sick people in 11 countries in Africa, one in Asia and another in Latin America; 26.7 percent of the care centres for the sick with HIV/AIDS in the world are served by the Catholic Church.

In this way we desire to cooperate in some way with the

great task that the WHO is carrying out, and in this health context, to contribute our endeavours to helping in particular the poorest and neediest.

Cardinal Javier Lozano Barragán
58th Assembly of the World Health Organization (WHO)
18 May 2005

MARCH

MARCH

That the Word of God may be ever more listened to, contemplated, loved and lived.

*Your Eminences,
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

I offer my most cordial greeting to all of you who are taking part in the Congress on *Sacred Scripture in the Life of the Church*, an event organized by the Catholic Biblical Federation and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the promulgation of *Dei Verbum*, the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation. I congratulate you on this initiative, connected with one of the most important Documents of the Second Vatican Council.

I greet the Cardinals and Bishops, who are the first witnesses of the Word of God, the theologians who investigate, explain and translate it into today's language, the Pastors who seek in it appropriate solutions for the problems of our time.

I warmly thank all who work in the service of the translation and circulation of the Bible, providing the means for explaining, teaching and interpreting its message. In this regard, my special thanks go to the Catholic Biblical Federation for its activity, the biblical ministry it promotes and its faithful support of the directives of the Magisterium as well as to its spirit of openness to ecumenical collaboration in the biblical context.

I express my deepest joy at the presence at this Congress of "Fraternal Delegates" of the Churches and Ecclesial Communities of East and West, and I greet with cordial respect the representatives who have spoken on behalf of the great world Religions.

The Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum*, whose drafting I

personally witnessed as a young theologian, taking part in the lively discussions that went with it, begins with a deeply meaningful sentence: "*Dei Verbum religiose audiens et fidenter proclamans, Sacrosancta Synodus...*" ["Hearing the Word of God with reverence, and proclaiming it with faith, the Sacred Synod..."] (n. 1).

With these words the Council points out a descriptive aspect of the Church: she is a community that listens to and proclaims the Word of God.

The Church does not live on herself but on the Gospel, and in the Gospel always and ever anew finds the directions for her journey. This is a point that every Christian must understand and apply to himself or herself: only those who first listen to the Word can become preachers of it.

Indeed, they must not teach their own wisdom but the wisdom of God, which often appears to be foolishness in the eyes of the world (cf. 1Co 1:23).

The Church knows well that Christ lives in the Sacred Scriptures. For this very reason - as the Constitution stresses - she has always venerated the divine Scriptures in the same way as she venerates the Body of the Lord (cf. *Dei Verbum*, n. 21).

In view of this, Saint Jerome, cited by the conciliar Document, said that ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ (cf. *Dei Verbum*, n. 25).

The Church and the Word of God are inseparably linked. The Church lives on the Word of God and the Word of God echoes through the Church, in her teaching and throughout her life (cf. *Dei Verbum*, n. 8). The Apostle Peter, therefore, reminds us that no prophecy contained in Scripture can be subjected to a personal interpretation. "Prophecy has never been put forward by man's willing it. It is rather that men impelled by the Holy Spirit have

spoken under God's influence" (2P 1:20).

We are grateful to God that in recent times, and thanks to the impact made by the Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum*, the fundamental importance of the Word of God has been deeply re-evaluated. From this has derived a renewal of the Church's life, especially in her preaching, catechesis, theology and spirituality, and even in the ecumenical process. The Church must be constantly renewed and rejuvenated and the Word of God, which never ages and is never depleted, is a privileged means to achieve this goal. Indeed, it is the Word of God, through the Holy Spirit, which always guides us to the whole truth (cf. Jn 16:13).

In this context, I would like in particular to recall and recommend the ancient tradition of *Lectio divina*: the diligent reading of Sacred Scripture accompanied by prayer brings about that intimate dialogue in which the person reading hears God who is speaking, and in praying, responds to him with trusting openness of heart (cf. *Dei Verbum*, n. 25). If it is effectively promoted, this practice will bring to the Church - I am convinced of it - a new spiritual springtime.

As a strong point of biblical ministry, *Lectio divina* should therefore be increasingly encouraged, also through the use of new methods, carefully thought through and in step with the times. It should never be forgotten that the Word of God is a lamp for our feet and a light for our path (cf. Ps 119[118]:105).

In invoking God's Blessing upon your work, your projects and the Congress in which you are taking part, I join in the hope that enlivens you: *May the Word of the Lord make progress* (cf. 2Th 3:1) to the very ends of the earth, so that through the proclamation of salvation the whole world through hearing it may believe, through

belief it may hope, and through hope it may come to love (cf. *Dei Verbum*, n. 1). I thank you with all my heart!

Benedict XVI
Address to the participants in the International Congress
organized to commemorate the 40th Anniversary of the
Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation "Dei Verbum"
16 September 2005

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LITURGY – CELEBRATION

EUCCHARIST:

Mass of the Most Holy Virgin Mary, in the time of the Nativity
(RM).

CELEBRATION OF THE WORD:

First reading: The People who walked in darkness saw a great light: Is 9:1-7.

Responsorial Psalm: Your word, Lord, is light on my path: Ps 119:105.

Second reading: The new Jerusalem: Rv 21:1-5.

Gospel: Happy those who hear the word of God and keep it: Lk 11:27-28.

QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP REFLECTION

1. What is the role of the Word of God in the daily life of Christians?

2. What Word of God do you cherish most?
3. Can you give examples of a truly lived Word of God?

PRAYER - MEDITATION

God calls Samuel

1 Samuel 3:1-21

Now, the boy Samuel was serving Yahweh in the presence of Eli; in those days it was rare for Yahweh to speak; visions were uncommon. One day, it happened that Eli was lying down in his room. His eyes were beginning to grow dim; he could no longer see. The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying in Yahweh's sanctuary, where the ark of God was, when Yahweh called "Samuel! Samuel!" He answered, "Here I am", and running to Eli, he said, "Here I am, as you called me". Eli said, "I did not call. Go back and lie down". So he went and lay down. And again Yahweh called, "Samuel! Samuel!" He got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, as you called me". He replied, "I did not call, my son go back and lie down". As yet, Samuel had no knowledge of Yahweh and the word of Yahweh had not yet been revealed to him. Again Yahweh called, the third time. He got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, as you called me". Eli then understood that Yahweh was calling the child, and he said to Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if someone calls say, "Speak, Yahweh; for your servant is listening". So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

Yahweh then came and stood by, calling as he had done before, "Samuel! Samuel!" Samuel answered, "Speak, Yahweh; for your servant is listening. Yahweh then said to Samuel, "I am going to do something in Israel which will make the ears of all who hear of it ring. I shall carry out that day against Eli everything that I have said about his family, from beginning to end. You are to tell him that I condemn his family for ever, since he is aware that his sons have been cursing God and yet has not corrected them. Therefore -I swear it to the family of Eli - no sacrifice or offering shall ever expiate the guilt of Eli's family.

Samuel lay where he was until morning and then opened the doors of Yahweh temple. Samuel was afraid to tell Eli about the vision, but Eli called Samuel and said, "Samuel, my son". "Here I am", he replied. Eli asked, "What message did he give you? Please do not hide it from me. May God bring unnameable ills on you and worse ones, too, if you hide from me anything of what he said to you". Samuel then told him everything, hiding nothing from him. Eli said, "He is Yahweh; let him do what he thinks good".

Samuel grew up, Yahweh was with him and did not let a single word fall to the ground of all that he had told him. All Israel knew, from Dan to Beersheba, that Samuel was attested as a prophet of Yahweh. Yahweh continued to manifest himself at Shiloh, revealing himself to Samuel there, and for all Israel, the word of Samuel was as the word of Yahweh; since Eli was very old and his sons persisted in their wicked behaviour towards Yahweh.

MISSION INTENTION

That the training of catechists, organizers and lay people committed in the service of the Gospel may be the constant concern of those responsible for the young Churches.

Amid the difficulties of the present moment, the Church in Zimbabwe can rejoice in the presence of so many communities vibrant in faith, a significant number of vocations to the priesthood and religious life, and the presence of a committed laity devoted to various works of the apostolate. These gifts of God's grace are at once a consolation and a challenge to *an ever more profound and integrated catechesis* aimed at training the faithful to live fully their Christian vocation. "In all areas of Church life, formation is of primary importance" for the future of the Church in Africa (*Ecclesia in Africa*, 75). For this reason, I encourage you to work together to ensure *suitable and comprehensive catechetical preparation for all the faithful*, and to take whatever steps may be necessary to provide for a more systematic education of catechists. *Future priests*, for their part, should be helped to present the fullness of the Catholic faith in a way which truly addresses and responds to people's difficulties, questions and problems. The national seminaries require practical support in their challenging task of providing seminarians with an adequate human, spiritual, doctrinal and pastoral formation, while the younger clergy would greatly benefit, in the first years of their priestly ministry, from a programme of spiritual, pastoral and human accompaniment guided by experienced and exemplary priests. Your concern for sound catechesis and an integral religious education must also extend to the system of *Catholic schools*, whose religious identity needs to be strengthened, for the good not only of their students, but of the entire Catholic community in your country.

Dear Brother Bishops, in union with the Successor of Peter and the College of Bishops, you have been sent forth as witnesses to the hope held out by the Gospel of Jesus Christ (cf. *Pastores Gregis*, 5). As you return to your native land strengthened in faith and in the bond of ecclesial communion, I ask you to cooperate generously in the service of the Gospel, so that the light of God's word will shine ever more brightly in the minds and hearts of Zimbabwe's Catholics, inspiring in them a deeper love of Christ and a more firm commitment to the spread of his Kingdom of holiness, justice and truth. With great affection I commend you and the clergy, religious

and laity of your Dioceses to the loving intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church, and cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of joy and peace in the Lord.

Benedict XVI

*Address to the Bishops of Zimbabwe on their "Ad Limina" visit
2 July 2005*

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APRIL

- 183 -

APRIL

That, allowing himself to be enlightened and guided by the Holy Spirit, every Christian may answer enthusiastically and faithfully to the universal call to sanctity.

Dear young friends,

In our pilgrimage with the mysterious Magi from the East, we have arrived at the moment which Saint Matthew describes in his Gospel with these words: "Going into the house (over which the star had halted), they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshipped him" (Mt 2:11). Outwardly, their journey was now over. They had reached their goal.

But at this point a new journey began for them, an inner pilgrimage which changed their whole lives. Their mental picture of the infant King they were expecting to find must have been very different. They had stopped at Jerusalem specifically in order to ask the King who lived there for news of the promised King who had been born. They knew that the world was in disorder, and for that reason their hearts were troubled.

(...)

Dear friends, what does all this mean for us? What we have just been saying about the nature of God being different, and about the way our lives must be shaped accordingly, sounds very fine, but remains rather vague and unfocused. That is why God has given us examples. The Magi from the East are just the first in a long procession of men and women who have constantly tried to gaze upon God's star in their lives, going in search of the God who has drawn close to us and shows us the way.

It is the great multitude of the saints - both known and unknown - in whose lives the Lord has opened up the Gospel before us and turned over the pages; he has done this throughout history and he still does so today. In their lives, as if in a great picture-book,

the riches of the Gospel are revealed. They are the shining path which God himself has traced throughout history and is still tracing today.

My venerable Predecessor Pope John Paul II, who is with us at this moment, beatified and canonized a great many people from both the distant and the recent past. Through these individuals he wanted to show us how to be Christian: how to live life as it should be lived - according to God's way. The saints and the blessed did not doggedly seek their own happiness, but simply wanted to give themselves, because the light of Christ had shone upon them.

They show us the way to attain happiness, they show us how to be truly human. Through all the ups and downs of history, they were the true reformers who constantly rescued it from plunging into the valley of darkness; it was they who constantly shed upon it the light that was needed to make sense - even in the midst of suffering - of God's words spoken at the end of the work of creation: "It is very good". One need only think of such figures as Saint Benedict, Saint Francis of Assisi, Saint Teresa of Avila, Saint Ignatius of Loyola, Saint Charles Borromeo, the founders of 19-century religious orders who inspired and guided the social movement, or the saints of our own day - Maximilian Kolbe, Edith Stein, Mother Teresa, Padre Pio. In contemplating these figures we learn what it means "to adore" and what it means to live according to the measure of the Child of Bethlehem, by the measure of Jesus Christ and of God himself.

The saints, as we said, are the true reformers. Now I want to express this in an even more radical way: only from the saints, only from God does true revolution come, the definitive way to change the world. In the last century we experienced revolutions with a common programme - expecting nothing more from God, they assumed total responsibility for the cause of the world in order to change it. And this, as we saw, meant that a human and partial point of view was always taken as an absolute guiding principle. Absolutizing what is not absolute but relative is called

totalitarianism. It does not liberate man, but takes away his dignity and enslaves him. It is not ideologies that save the world, but only a return to the living God, our Creator, the guarantor of our freedom, the guarantor of what is really good and true. True revolution consists in simply turning to God who is the measure of what is right and who at the same time is everlasting love. And what could ever save us apart from love?

Dear friends! Allow me to add just two brief thoughts. There are many who speak of God; some even preach hatred and perpetrate violence in God's Name. So it is important to discover the true face of God. The Magi from the East found it when they knelt down before the Child of Bethlehem. "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father", said Jesus to Philip (Jn 14:9). In Jesus Christ, who allowed his heart to be pierced for us, the true face of God is seen. We will follow him together with the great multitude of those who went before us. Then we will be travelling along the right path.

This means that we are not constructing a private God, we are not constructing a private Jesus, but that we believe and worship the Jesus who is manifested to us by the Sacred Scriptures and who reveals himself to be alive in the great procession of the faithful called the Church, always alongside us and always before us.

There is much that could be criticized in the Church. We know this and the Lord himself told us so: it is a net with good fish and bad fish, a field with wheat and darnel. Pope John Paul II, as well as revealing the true face of the Church in the many saints that he canonized, also asked pardon for the wrong that was done in the course of history through the words and deeds of members of the Church. In this way he showed us our own true image and urged us to take our place, with all our faults and weaknesses, in the procession of the saints that began with the Magi from the East. It is actually consoling to realize that there is darnel in the Church. In this way, despite all our defects, we can still hope to be counted among the disciples of Jesus, who came to call sinners.

The Church is like a human family, but at the same time it is also the great family of God, through which he establishes an overarching communion and unity that embraces every continent, culture and nation. So we are glad to belong to this great family that we see here; we are glad to have brothers and friends all over the world. Here in Cologne we discover the joy of belonging to a family as vast as the world, including Heaven and earth, the past, the present, the future and every part of the earth. In this great band of pilgrims we walk side by side with Christ, we walk with the star that enlightens our history.

"Going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshipped him" (Mt 2:11). Dear friends, this is not a distant story that took place long ago. It is with us now. Here in the Sacred Host he is present before us and in our midst. As at that time, so now he is mysteriously veiled in a sacred silence; as at that time, it is here that the true face of God is revealed. For us he became a grain of wheat that falls on the ground and dies and bears fruit until the end of the world (cf. Jn 12:24).

He is present now as he was then in Bethlehem. He invites us to that inner pilgrimage which is called adoration. Let us set off on this pilgrimage of the spirit and let us ask him to be our guide. Amen.

Benedict XVI
Apostolic Journey to Cologne on the occasion of the
XX World Youth Day - Youth Vigil
20 August 2005

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LITURGY – CELEBRATION

EUCCHARIST:

Mass for the Solemnity of All Saints (RM, Mass for the 1st of

November).

CELEBRATION OF THE WORD:

First reading: I saw a number, impossible to count, of people from every nation, race, tribe and language: Rv 7:2-4,9-14.

Responsorial Psalm: This is the generation who listens to the Lord: Ps 23 (24).

Second reading: We shall see God as he is: 1Jn 3:1-3.

Gospel: Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven: Mt 5:1-12.

QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP REFLECTION

1. Is the universal call to sanctity part of our daily life?
2. What is the most important thing for answering this call?
3. How can one help people in general to answer it?

PRAYER - MEDITATION

God's election and his favour

Deuteronomy 7:6-16

Yahweh set his heart on you and chose you not because you were the most numerous of all peoples - for indeed you were the smallest of all- but because he loved you and meant to keep the oath which he swore to your ancestors: that was why Yahweh brought you out with his mighty hand and redeemed you from the place of slave-labour, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. From this you can see that Yahweh your God is the true God, the faithful God who, though he is true to his covenant and his faithful love for a thousand generations as regards those who love him and keep his commandments, punishes in their own persons those that hate him. He destroys anyone who hates him, without delay; and it is in their own persons that he punishes them. Hence, you must keep and observe the commandments, laws and customs which I am laying

down for you today.

"Listen to these ordinances, be true to them and observe them, and in return Yahweh your God will be true to the covenant and love which he promised on oath to your ancestors. He will love you and bless you and increase your numbers; he will bless the fruit of your body and the produce of your soil, your corn, your new wine, your oil, the issue of your cattle, the young of your flock, in the country which he swore to your ancestors that he would give you. You will be the most blessed of all peoples. None of you, man or woman, will be sterile, no male or female of your beasts infertile. Yahweh will deflect all illness from you; he will not afflict you with those evil plagues of Egypt which you have known, but will inflict them on all who hate you.

MISSION INTENTION

That the number of priestly and religious vocations may grow in North America and the countries of the Pacific Ocean, in order to give an adequate answer to the pastoral and missionary needs of those populations.

2. Jesus Christ continues to draw the peoples of your two island nations to a still deeper faith and life in him. As Bishops you respond to his voice by asking how the Church can become an even more effective instrument of Christ (cf. *Ecclesia in Oceania*, 4). The recent national "General Assembly" in Papua New Guinea and the "Seminar" in Solomon Islands have addressed this task. From these two events clear signs of hope have emerged including the keen participation of the young in the mission of the Church, the outstanding generosity of missionaries, and the flowering of local vocations. At the same time you have not hesitated to recognize the difficulties which continue to afflict your Dioceses. In the face of these, the faithful look to you to be courageous witnesses to Christ, vigilant in seeking new ways to teach the faith so that the power of the Gospel can permeate their way of thinking, standards of judgement, and norms of behaviour (cf. *Sapientia Christiana*,

Foreword).

3. As you know, priests are and must be a Bishop's closest cooperators (cf. *Pastores Gregis*, 47). The particular significance of the *communio* between a Bishop and his presbyters demands that your interest in their well-being be of the utmost importance to you. This special relationship is expressed most effectively through your assiduous care to uphold the unique identity of your priests, to encourage their personal sanctification in the ministry, and to foster a deepening of their pastoral commitment. Priestly identity must never be likened to any secular title or confused with civic or political office. Rather, configured to Christ who emptied himself taking the form of a servant (cf. Ph 2:7-8), the priest lives a life of simplicity, chastity and humble service, which inspires others by example. At the heart of the priesthood is the daily, devout celebration of Holy Mass. In this Year of the Eucharist I appeal to your priests: be faithful to this commitment which is the centre and mission of the life of each one of you (Message at the *Missa Pro Ecclesia*, 20 April 2005, 4). The proper formation of Priests and Religious is absolutely integral to successful evangelization (cf. *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 2). I know you have been addressing this matter with due attention for quite some time. Your concern for the human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral development of your seminarians, as well as men and women Religious in training, will bear much fruit in your Dioceses. I encourage you therefore to ensure careful selection of candidates, to supervise your seminaries personally and to provide regular programmes of ongoing formation so necessary for deepening priestly and religious identity and enriching joyful commitment to celibacy. Finally in this regard, I offer my prayers of deep gratitude for those who serve in seminaries and houses of formation. Please let them know that the Holy Father thanks them for their generosity.

4. Dear Brothers, your Catechists have embraced with great zeal the burning conviction of Saint Paul: "woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel" (1Co 9:16). During the Synod for Oceania many

of you noted with satisfaction that an increasing number of the lay faithful are coming to a deeper appreciation of their duty to participate in the Church's mission of evangelization (cf. *Ecclesia in Oceania*, 19). If this zeal is to succeed in convincing an ever greater number of believers that "faith in fact has the force to shape culture itself by penetrating it to its very core" (*ibid.*, 20) then the pastoral priorities which you have identified - especially that of marriage and stable family life - will require corresponding, appropriate adult catechetical programmes. In this way, I am confident that your people will deepen their understanding of the faith, grow in their ability to express its liberating truth, and account for the hope that is in them! (cf. 1P 3:15).

5. With fraternal affection I offer these reflections wishing to affirm you in your desire to embrace the summons to testimony and evangelization which ensue from the encounter with Christ, constantly intensified and deepened in the Eucharist (cf. *Mane Nobiscum Domine*, 24). United in your proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ, go forward in hope! Invoking upon you the intercession of Blessed Peter To Rot, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing to you and the priests, Religious, and lay faithful of your Dioceses.

Benedict XVI

Address to the Bishops of the Episcopal Conference of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands on their "Ad Limina Apostolorum" visit

25 June 2005

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MAY

- 193 -

MAY

That, following the example of the Virgin Mary, all Christians should allow themselves to be guided by the word of God and always remain attentive to the signs of the Lord in his own life.

41. Outstanding among the saints is Mary, Mother of the Lord and mirror of all holiness. In the *Gospel of Luke* we find her engaged in a service of charity to her cousin Elizabeth, with whom she remained for "about three months" (1:56) so as to assist her in the final phase of her pregnancy. "*Magnificat anima mea Dominum*", she says on the occasion of that visit, "My soul magnifies the Lord" (Lk 1:46). In these words she expresses her whole programme of life: not setting herself at the centre, but leaving space for God, who is encountered both in prayer and in service of neighbour - only then does goodness enter the world. Mary's greatness consists in the fact that she wants to magnify God, not herself. She is lowly: her only desire is to be the handmaid of the Lord (cf. Lk 1:38,48). She knows that she will only contribute to the salvation of the world if, rather than carrying out her own projects, she places herself completely at the disposal of God's initiatives. Mary is a woman of hope: only because she believes in God's promises and awaits the salvation of Israel, can the angel visit her and call her to the decisive service of these promises. Mary is a woman of faith: "Blessed are you who believed", Elizabeth says to her (cf. Lk 1:45).

The *Magnificat* - a portrait, so to speak, of her soul - is entirely woven from threads of Holy Scripture, threads drawn from the Word of God. Here we see how completely at home Mary is with the Word of God, with ease she moves in and out of it. She speaks and thinks with the Word of God; the Word of God becomes her word, and her word issues from the Word of God. Here we see how her thoughts are attuned to the thoughts of God, how her will is

one with the will of God. Since Mary is completely imbued with the Word of God, she is able to become the Mother of the Word Incarnate. Finally, Mary is a woman who loves. How could it be otherwise? As a believer who in faith thinks with God's thoughts and wills with God's will, she cannot fail to be a woman who loves. We sense this in her quiet gestures, as recounted by the infancy narratives in the Gospel. We see it in the delicacy with which she recognizes the need of the spouses at Cana and makes it known to Jesus. We see it in the humility with which she recedes into the background during Jesus' public life, knowing that the Son must establish a new family and that the Mother's hour will come only with the Cross, which will be Jesus' true hour (cf. Jn 2:4; 13:1). When the disciples flee, Mary will remain beneath the Cross (cf. Jn 19:25-27); later, at the hour of Pentecost, it will be they who gather around her as they wait for the Holy Spirit (cf. Ac 1:14).

42. The lives of the saints are not limited to their earthly biographies but also include their being and working in God after death. In the saints one thing becomes clear: those who draw near to God do not withdraw from men, but rather become truly close to them. In no one do we see this more clearly than in Mary. The words addressed by the crucified Lord to his disciple - to John and through him to all disciples of Jesus: "Behold, your mother!" (Jn 19:27) - are fulfilled anew in every generation. Mary has truly become the Mother of all believers.

Men and women of every time and place have recourse to her motherly kindness and her virginal purity and grace, in all their needs and aspirations, their joys and sorrows, their moments of loneliness and their common endeavours. They constantly experience the gift of her goodness and the unfailing love which she pours out from the depths of her heart. The testimonials of gratitude, offered to her from every continent and culture, are a recognition of that pure love which is not self-seeking but simply benevolent. At

the same time, the devotion of the faithful shows an infallible intuition of how such love is possible: it becomes so as a result of the most intimate union with God, through which the soul is totally pervaded by him - a condition which enables those who have drunk from the fountain of God's love to become in their turn a fountain from which "flow rivers of living water" (Jn 7:38).

Mary, Virgin and Mother, shows us what love is and whence it draws its origin and its constantly renewed power. To her we entrust the Church and her mission in the service of love:

Holy Mary, Mother of God, you have given the world its true light, Jesus, your Son – the Son of God. You abandoned yourself completely to God's call and thus became a wellspring of the goodness which flows forth from him. Show us Jesus. Lead us to him. Teach us to know and love him, so that we too can become capable of true love and be fountains of living water in the midst of a thirsting world.

Benedict XVI
Encyclical Letter "Deus Caritas Est"
25 December 2005

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LITURGY – CELEBRATION

EUCCHARIST:

Mass for the feast of the Visitation of the Most Holy Virgin (RM, Mass for May 31st).

CELEBRATION OF THE WORD:

First reading: The Lord your God is a powerful Saviour: Zp 3:14-18.

Responsorial Psalm: The song of the "Magnificat": Lk 1:46-56.

Second reading: Life in the Spirit: Rm 12:9-16.

Gospel: Happy are you who believed in the accomplishment of the Lord's words: Lk 1:39-56.

QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP REFLECTION

1. Through what signs did Jesus manifest himself?
2. When do you say that you have received a sign from the Lord?
3. How can we be a sign of the Lord for one another?

PRAYER - MEDITATION

The vision of the woman and the dragon

Revelation 12:1-17

Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman, robed with the sun, standing on the moon, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was pregnant, and in labour, crying aloud in the pangs of childbirth. Then a second sign appeared in the sky: there was a huge red dragon with seven heads and ten horns, and each of the seven heads crowned with a coronet. Its tail swept a third of *the stars from the sky and hurled them to the ground*, and the dragon stopped in front of the woman as she was at the point of giving birth, so that he could eat the child as soon as it was born. The woman *was delivered of a boy*, the son who was *to rule all the nations with an iron sceptre*, and the child was taken straight up to God and to his throne, while the woman escaped into the desert, where God had prepared a place for her to be looked after for twelve hundred and sixty days.

And now war broke out in heaven, when *Michael* with his angels attacked the dragon. The dragon fought back with his angels, but they were defeated and driven out of heaven. The great dragon, the primeval serpent, known as the devil or Satan, who had led all the world astray, was hurled down to the earth and his angels were hurled down with him. Then I heard a voice shout from heaven, "Salvation and power and empire for ever have been won by our God, and all authority for his Christ, now that the accuser, who accused our brothers day and night before our God, has been

brought down. They have triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word to which they bore witness, because even in the face of death they did not cling to life. So let the heavens rejoice and all who live there; but for you, earth and sea, disaster is coming - because the devil has gone to you in a rage, knowing that he has little time left".

As soon as the dragon found himself hurled down to the earth, he sprang in pursuit of the woman, the mother of the male child, but she was given a pair of the great eagle's wings to fly away from the serpent into the desert, to the place where she was to be looked after for a *time, two times and half a time*. So the serpent vomited water from his mouth, like a river, after the woman, to sweep her away in the current, but the earth came to her rescue; it opened its mouth and swallowed the river spewed from the dragon's mouth. Then the dragon was enraged with the woman and went away to make war on the rest of her children, who obey God's commandments and have in themselves the witness of Jesus.

MISSION INTENTION

That in Mission territories there may be no lack of good and enlightened teachers in the major Seminaries and in the Institutes of consecrated life.

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate,

I am pleased to welcome you as you make your pilgrimage to the tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul, you who have received from the Lord the duty to guide his Church in Rwanda. I thank Bishop Alexis Habiyaambere of Nyundo, President of your Bishops' Conference, for his fraternal words. Through you, I address an affectionate greeting to your communities, encouraging priests and faithful, severely tried by the genocide of 1994 and its consequences, to remain firm in faith, to persevere in the hope given by the Risen Christ, overcoming every temptation to become discouraged. May the Spirit of Pentecost, diffused throughout the universe, make fruitful the efforts of those who work toward the construction of brotherhood between all Rwandans, in a spirit of truth and justice!

Your quinquennial reports show that the Spirit, builder of the Church in Rwanda in the ups and downs of its history, is at work. To contribute actively to peace and reconciliation, you give priority to a pastoral service of neighbourliness, founded on the involvement of small communities of lay people in the missionary work of the Church, in harmony with the pastors. I encourage you to sustain these communities so that the faithful welcome the truth of faith and its demands, developing in this way a more intense ecclesial and spiritual life, without allowing yourselves to be distracted from the Gospel of Christ, especially by the numerous sects present in your Country.

Work ceaselessly so that the Gospel may penetrate more deeply into the heart and existence of believers, inviting the faithful to undertake their individual responsibilities in society conscientiously, especially in the economic and political fields, with

a moral sense that is nourished by the Gospel and the Church's social teaching.

I greet the priests of your Dioceses and the young people who, with generosity, are preparing for the priesthood. Their number is an authentic sign of hope for the future. As the clergy is becoming local, I wish to acknowledge the patient work carried out by the missionaries who proclaimed Christ and his Gospel and gave life to the Christian communities for which you are responsible today. I invite you to stay close to your priests, concerning yourselves with their permanent formation on the theological and spiritual level, attentive to their life-style and the exercise of their mission so that they become authentic witnesses of the Word they proclaim and of the sacraments they administer. In the gift of themselves to Christ and to the people to whom they are pastors, may they remain faithful to the demands of their state-in-life and live their priesthood as a true journey of holiness!

At the end of our meeting, dear Brothers in the Episcopate, I wish to be close to the people entrusted to you, encouraging the faithful and pastors to build communities that are enlivened by sincere reciprocal love and permeated by the imperious desire to work for authentic reconciliation! May the song of the messengers of the Good News of Christ, victor over death, resound on the hilltops (cf. Is 52:7)! Entrusting the hopes and sufferings of the Rwandan People to the intercession of the Queen of the Apostles, I impart an affectionate Apostolic Blessing upon you all, willingly extending it to the priests, men and women religious, catechists and all the faithful of your Dioceses.

Benedict XVI

*Address to the Members of the Bishops' Conference of Rwanda
on their "Ad Limina" visit, 21 May 2005*

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JUNE

- 203 -

JUNE

That the Lord may protect sailors and all those involved in maritime activities.

Final Document of the XXI World Congress of the Apostleship of the Sea

I. Preamble

During this Congress we have heard the cries of the people who have been confronted with the negative impact of globalization. The Gospel and the Church teach us that, above all, human dignity must be the core value to be respected and that economy is for man and not man for economy. The poverty that results also from unfettered globalization is one of the worst violations of human dignity. The Christian Churches and ecclesial Communities have a special duty to witness together ecumenically in the hope of controlling the excesses of globalization, and they should invite all people of good will, in all religions, to collaborate for this aim.

Aware that the rules of this new global economy and market frighten many but are only partially written and are themselves the subject of considerable dispute, we, in the AOS, are called to give a human face to globalization in the maritime world, to help write the rules ("governance") of a new world order, which will be based on ethical principles, solidarity and the inviolability of human dignity.
(...)

3. Objectives:

a) Towards the Families of the People of the Sea:

Seafarers' Family (or Wives) Associations are to be encouraged and be promoted everywhere.

Wives, children and families are called to participate more fully in "maritime ministry". They are further encouraged to take initiatives that will bring port communities together to support and offer spiritual and practical guidance in the embrace of local AOS Chaplaincies.

b) Towards International Shipping:

The AOS commends the efforts of the ILO/IMO Working Group on abandoned seafarers and the responsibilities of shipowners regarding injuries and deaths of seafarers, with the hope that existing Guidelines will develop into a Convention. It supports all initiatives that give ILO the power to enforce their Maritime Conventions.

In the aftermath of September 11, we recognize that Governments care more for security measures. At the same time we are concerned for the physical, psychological and spiritual health of seafarers who can be denied shore leave by excessively stringent dispositions.

We are grateful to ITF-Seafarers' Trust for its pro-active role in providing support for welfare work.

We wish to make known to all seafarers the new tool at their disposal in calling for help: the International Seafarers Assistance network (ISAN) which will offer a 24 hour toll-free phone service to seafarers anywhere in the world (00 800 SEAFARERS).

c) Towards Small Scale and Industrial Fishing:

Half a billion people in the World depend on fishing for their livelihood. Industrial fishing also has its share of problems. We know that fishers have often been denied their dignity.

The Congress recognizes their professionalism and contribution, both in small scale and traditional fishing, and wishes

to empower them to deal with their professional issues, infrastructures and finances. It recommends that, through international instruments, fishers may enjoy equal social protection as do merchant seafarers. The AOS shall seek and support the full and timely implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.

An "AOS Fishing Committee" should be constituted, comprised of AOS members working pastorally with fishers and in contact with their respective organizations at local, national and international levels.

Conclusion

There are three main points that have arisen during this Congress:

- solidarity must be globalized;
- Globalization must be given a human face;
- The Apostleship of the Sea has a role to play towards a new world order that involves taking into account the values of the Gospel and the social doctrine of the Church.

By opening our heart to the love of God, the love of our brothers and sisters will make us capable of shaping history according to God's plan. Our Lord tells us, "Do not be afraid, I shall be with you always" (Mt 28:20).

*Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of the
Migrants and Itinerant People
XXI World Congress of Apostolatus Maris
Rio de Janeiro, 5 October 2002*

LITURGY – CELEBRATION

EUCCHARIST:

Mass for the sanctification of work (RM, Masses for various needs).

CELEBRATION OF THE WORD:

First reading: I will send my angel to guard you as you go: Ex 23:20-23.

Responsorial Psalm: Let your face smile on us and we shall be safe: Ps 79 (80).

Second reading: I never stop thanking God for all the graces you have received: 1Co 1:3-9.

Gospel: Who can this be? Even the wind and the sea obey him: Mk 4:35-41.

QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP REFLECTION

1. What do you think is the hardest thing for a sailor, his wife, his children?
2. How did you react to the recent disaster which claimed the life of thousands of seamen?
3. Why is a boat in a storm a symbol of the Church?

PRAYER - MEDITATION

Raphael the angel

Tobit 12:11-19

I am going to tell you the whole truth, hiding nothing from you. I have already told you that it is right to keep the secret of a king, yet right too to reveal in a worthy way the words of God. So you must know that when you and Sarah were at prayer, it was I who offered your supplications before the glory of the Lord and who read them; so too when you were burying the dead. When you did not hesitate to get up and leave the table to go and bury a dead man, I was sent to test your faith, and at the same time God sent me to heal you and your daughter-in-law Sarah. I am Raphael, one of the seven angels who stand ever ready to enter the presence of the glory of the Lord.

They were both overwhelmed with awe; they fell on their faces in terror. But the angel said, "Do not be afraid; peace be with you. Bless God for ever. As far as I was concerned, when I was with you, my presence was not by any decision of mine, but by the will of God; he is the one whom you must bless as long as you live, he the one that you must praise.

MISSION INTENTION

That the Church in North Africa may bear witness, with its presence and its action, to God's love for every individual and all peoples.

Mr Ambassador,

I am pleased to welcome Your Excellency on the occasion of the presentation of the Letters which accredit you as Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of the Democratic and Popular Algerian Republic to the Holy See.

I thank you, Mr Ambassador, for the cordial greetings you have just presented me with in your name and the name of the President of the Republic, as well as in the name of the Algerian government and people. I greatly appreciated the tokens of sympathy from Algeria on the occasion of the death of Pope John Paul II, in particular at the time of the celebration of the obsequies, in the presence of His Excellency Mr Abdelaziz Bouteflika. I would appreciate, in return, that you transmit my good wishes for his person, particularly for his health, and for the accomplishment of his lofty mission in the service of his fellow-citizens. I pray the Almighty to bless the efforts of the Algerian people in the task of edification of an ever more fraternal and united nation.

Mr Ambassador, you have evoked the serious violence your country has had to face in the course of recent years. Only an authentic reconciliation can allow men to live in harmony and peace among themselves. The renunciation of vengeance and the resolute commitment on the path of forgiveness are the means worthy of man for strengthening the bonds of brotherhood and solidarity. As my venerated predecessor Pope John Paul II stated, "the capacity to forgive is the basis of every project for a more just and more united future society" (*Message for World Peace Day 2002*, n.9). Forgiveness leads people towards deeper and richer humanity, awakening in each one the best of himself. But an attitude of this

kind, which increases man's stature, is necessarily associated with the exigencies of justice. Forgiveness is not a sign of weakness and it cannot ignore the legitimate claims of the victims of injustice, who ask that their rights be recognized and the damages they have sustained compensated. Forgiveness is, in a way, the means of perfecting fragile and imperfect human justice, allowing the wounds which at times have lastingly scarred people in their deepest selves to heal and reestablishing in the best possible way the human relations which have been destabilized.

To defend the sacred value of the human person and favour respect for the other and religious freedom it is therefore necessary that the spirit of reconciliation and justice be instilled in the young generations, particularly in the family and in education. It is thus that societies will be able to progress in solidarity and fraternity, so that violence is not encouraged as a solution to the problems they are faced with and religion is never used to justify a choice of this kind or to create inequalities among persons.

Mr Ambassador, you have recalled the great figures of peace and reconciliation among the communities which have marked the ancient and contemporary history of your country. And recently the Church has honoured most particularly Charles de Foucauld, who lived in your country, wishing to be close to all people as their "universal brother". As I have already had occasion to say, the Catholic Church intends pursuing an open and sincere dialogue with the believers of other religions, in search of the true good of man and society. I am therefore happy to know the quality of the relations fostered in your country between the Catholic community and the Muslim community. The meeting, in truth, between the believers of different religions is an exacting challenge for the future of peace in the world, and this requires a great deal of perseverance. To overcome reciprocal ignorance and prejudices, it is important that bonds of trust between persons be created, in particular through sharing daily life and working together, so that the free expression of confessional differences may not be grounds for mutual exclusion

but rather an occasion to learn to live, each respecting the identity of the other.

Through your intervention, Mr Ambassador, I am happy to be able to affectionately greet the Catholic community of Algeria united around its Bishops. In the course of recent years it has courageously shared the trials of the Algerian people, offering a significant testimony of universal brotherhood and wishing to generously pursue its mission for the good of the entire country.

Mr Ambassador, today you are inaugurating the noble mission of representing your country to the Holy See. Please accept my very cordial wishes for its success and be sure that you will always find the necessary understanding and support from my collaborators!

With all my heart I invoke the abundance of divine Blessings on your Excellency, on your family, on your collaborators, on all your compatriots and their leaders.

*Benedict XVI
Address to H.E. Idris Jazairy, new Ambassador of the
Democratic and Popular Algerian Republic on the occasion of
the presentation of his credentials
1 December 2005*

JULY

- 213 -

JULY

That all citizens, individually and in groups, may be enabled to participate actively in the life and management of the common good.

28. In order to define more accurately the relationship between the necessary commitment to justice and the ministry of charity, two fundamental situations need to be considered:

a) The just ordering of society and the State is a central responsibility of politics. As Augustine once said, a State which is not governed according to justice would be just a bunch of thieves: "*Remota itaque iustitia quid sunt regna nisi magna latrocinia?*" (*De Civitate Dei*, IV, 4: CCL 47, 102). Fundamental to Christianity is the distinction between what belongs to Caesar and what belongs to God (cf. Mt 22:21), in other words, the distinction between Church and State, or, as the Second Vatican Council puts it, the autonomy of the temporal sphere (cf. Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 36). The State may not impose religion, yet it must guarantee religious freedom and harmony between the followers of different religions. For her part, the Church, as the social expression of Christian faith, has a proper independence and is structured on the basis of her faith as a community which the State must recognize. The two spheres are distinct, yet always interrelated.

Justice is both the aim and the intrinsic criterion of all politics. Politics is more than a mere mechanism for defining the rules of public life: its origin and its goal are found in justice, which by its very nature has to do with ethics. The State must inevitably face the question of how justice can be achieved here and now. But this presupposes an even more radical question: what is justice? The problem is one of practical reason; but if reason is to be exercised properly, it must undergo constant purification, since it can never be completely free of the danger of a certain ethical blindness caused by the dazzling effect of power and special interests.

Here politics and faith meet. Faith by its specific nature is an

encounter with the living God—an encounter opening up new horizons extending beyond the sphere of reason. But it is also a purifying force for reason itself. From God's standpoint, faith liberates reason from its blind spots and therefore helps it to be ever more fully itself. Faith enables reason to do its work more effectively and to see its proper object more clearly. This is where Catholic social doctrine has its place: it has no intention of giving the Church power over the State. Even less is it an attempt to impose on those who do not share the faith ways of thinking and modes of conduct proper to faith. Its aim is simply to help purify reason and to contribute, here and now, to the acknowledgment and attainment of what is just.

The Church's social teaching argues on the basis of reason and natural law, namely, on the basis of what is in accord with the nature of every human being. It recognizes that it is not the Church's responsibility to make this teaching prevail in political life. Rather, the Church wishes to help form consciences in political life and to stimulate greater insight into the authentic requirements of justice as well as greater readiness to act accordingly, even when this might involve conflict with situations of personal interest. Building a just social and civil order, wherein each person receives what is his or her due, is an essential task which every generation must take up anew. As a political task, this cannot be the Church's immediate responsibility. Yet, since it is also a most important human responsibility, the Church is duty-bound to offer, through the purification of reason and through ethical formation, her own specific contribution towards understanding the requirements of justice and achieving them politically.

The Church cannot and must not take upon herself the political battle to bring about the most just society possible. She cannot and must not replace the State. Yet at the same time she cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice. She has to play her part through rational argument and she has to reawaken the spiritual energy without which justice, which always

demands sacrifice, cannot prevail and prosper. A just society must be the achievement of politics, not of the Church. Yet the promotion of justice through efforts to bring about openness of mind and will to the demands of the common good is something which concerns the Church deeply.

b) Love — *caritas* — will always prove necessary, even in the most just society. There is no ordering of the State so just that it can eliminate the need for a service of love. Whoever wants to eliminate love is preparing to eliminate man as such. There will always be suffering which cries out for consolation and help. There will always be loneliness. There will always be situations of material need where help in the form of concrete love of neighbour is indispensable (cf. Congregation for Bishops, Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops *Apostolorum Successores* (22 February 2004), 197, Vatican City 2004, p. 217). The State which would provide everything, absorbing everything into itself, would ultimately become a mere bureaucracy incapable of guaranteeing the very thing which the suffering person — every person — needs: namely, loving personal concern. We do not need a State which regulates and controls everything, but a State which, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, generously acknowledges and supports initiatives arising from the different social forces and combines spontaneity with closeness to those in need. The Church is one of those living forces: she is alive with the love enkindled by the Spirit of Christ. This love does not simply offer people material help, but refreshment and care for their souls, something which often is even more necessary than material support. In the end, the claim that just social structures would make works of charity superfluous masks a materialist conception of man: the mistaken notion that man can live "by bread alone" (Mt 4:4; cf. Dt 8:3) — a conviction that demeans man and ultimately disregards all that is specifically human.

29. We can now determine more precisely, in the life of the Church, the relationship between commitment to the just ordering of the State and society on the one hand, and organized charitable

activity on the other. We have seen that the formation of just structures is not directly the duty of the Church, but belongs to the world of politics, the sphere of the autonomous use of reason. The Church has an indirect duty here, in that she is called to contribute to the purification of reason and to the reawakening of those moral forces without which just structures are neither established nor prove effective in the long run.

The direct duty to work for a just ordering of society, on the other hand, is proper to the lay faithful. As citizens of the State, they are called to take part in public life in a personal capacity. So they cannot relinquish their participation "in the many different economic, social, legislative, administrative and cultural areas, which are intended to promote organically and institutionally the *common good*" (John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* (30 December 1988), 42: AAS 81 (1989), 472). The mission of the lay faithful is therefore to configure social life correctly, respecting its legitimate autonomy and cooperating with other citizens according to their respective competencies and fulfilling their own responsibility (cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Doctrinal Note on Some Questions Regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life* (24 November 2002), 1). Even if the specific expressions of ecclesial charity can never be confused with the activity of the State, it still remains true that charity must animate the entire lives of the lay faithful and therefore also their political activity, lived as "social charity" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1939).

The Church's charitable organizations, on the other hand, constitute an *opus proprium*, a task agreeable to her, in which she does not cooperate collaterally, but acts as a subject with direct responsibility, doing what corresponds to her nature. The Church can never be exempted from practising charity as an organized activity of believers, and on the other hand, there will never be a situation where the charity of each individual Christian is unnecessary, because in addition to justice man needs, and will always need, love.

Benedict XVI
Encyclical Letter "Deus Caritas Est"
25 December 2005

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LITURGY – CELEBRATION

EUCCHARIST:

Mass for the laity (RM, Masses for various needs).

CELEBRATION OF THE WORD:

First reading: Go now to those whom I send you: Jr 1:4-9.

Responsorial Psalm: The God of Justice: Ps 94 (93).

Second reading: Give the reason for your hope: 1P 3:13-18.

Gospel: The parable of the yeast: Mt 13:33.

QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP REFLECTION

1. Why can the lay faithful not renounce multiform action in favour of the "common good"?
2. How can they delineate social life in an undeviating way?
3. In what does the "social charity" the Holy Father mentions in chapter 29 of his Encyclical "Deus Caritas Est" consist?

PRAYER - MEDITATION

Children of the light

Romans 13:1-14

Everyone is to obey the governing authorities, because there is no authority except from God and so whatever authorities exist have been appointed by God. So anyone who disobeys an authority is rebelling against God's ordinance; and rebels must expect to receive the condemnation they deserve. Magistrates bring fear not to those who do good, but to those who do evil. So if you want to live with no fear of authority, live honestly and you will have its approval; it is there to serve God for you and for your good. But if you do what is wrong, then you may well be afraid; because it is not for nothing that the symbol of authority is the sword: it is there to serve God, too, as his avenger, to bring retribution to wrongdoers. You must be obedient, therefore, not only because of this retribution, but also for conscience's sake. And this is why you should pay taxes, too, because the authorities are all serving God as his agents, even while they are busily occupied with that particular task. Pay to each one what is due to each: taxes to the one to whom tax is due, tolls to the one to whom tolls are due, respect to the one to whom respect is due, honour to the one to whom honour is due.

The only thing you should owe to anyone is love for one another, for to love the other person is to fulfil the law. All these: *You shall not commit adultery, you shall not kill, you shall not steal, you shall not covet*, and all the other commandments that there are, are summed up in this single phrase: *You must love your neighbour as yourself*. Love can cause no harm to your neighbour, and so love is the fulfilment of the Law.

Besides, you know the time has come; the moment is here for you to stop sleeping and wake up, because by now our salvation is nearer than when we first began to believe. The night is nearly over, daylight is on the way; so let us throw off everything that belongs to the darkness and equip ourselves for the light. Let us live decently, as in the light of day; with no orgies or drunkenness, no promiscuity or licentiousness, and no wrangling or jealousy. Let your armour be the Lord Jesus Christ, and stop worrying about how

your disordered natural inclinations may be fulfilled.

MISSION INTENTION

That, aware of their own missionary duty, all Christians may actively help all those engaged in the evangelization of Peoples.

Indeed, the approval on 7 December 1965 of the Decree *Ad Gentes* gave a new impetus to the Church's mission. The theological foundations of missionary commitment were more clearly spelled out, as well as its value and timeliness in the face of the changes in the world and the challenges of modern life to the preaching of the Gospel (cf. n. 1).

The Church has acquired an ever clearer awareness of her innate missionary vocation, recognizing it as a constitutive element of her very nature.

Out of obedience to the command of Christ, who sent his disciples to proclaim the Gospel to all the nations (cf. Mt 28:18-20), the Christian community in our time too feels sent to the men and women of the third millennium in order to acquaint them with the truth of the Gospel message and thereby give them access to the path of salvation.

And this, as I said, is not an option but the vocation proper to the People of God, a duty incumbent upon it by the command of the Lord Jesus Christ himself (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, n. 5).

Actually, the proclamation of and witness to the Gospel are the first service that Christians can render to every person and to the entire human race, called as they are to communicate to all God's love, which was fully manifested in Jesus Christ, the one Redeemer of the world.

The publication of the conciliar Decree *Ad Gentes*, on which

you have opportunely reflected, has made it possible to highlight better the original root of the Church's mission, that is, the Trinitarian life of God from which comes the movement of love that the Divine Persons pour out upon humanity. It all flows from the Heart of the heavenly Father, who so loved the world that he gave his Only-begotten Son so that those who believe in him should not perish but have eternal life (cf. Jn 3:16).

With the mystery of the Incarnation, the Only-begotten Son was made the authentic and supreme Mediator between the Father and men and women. In the One who died and rose, the Father's provident tenderness reaches every person in forms and ways he alone knows.

It is the Church's task to communicate this divine love ceaselessly through the vivifying action of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, it is the Spirit who transforms the life of believers, freeing them from the bondage of sin and death and making them capable of witnessing to the merciful love of God, who wishes to make humanity a single family in his Son (cf. *Deus Caritas Est*, n. 19).

From the outset, the Christian People has been clearly aware of the importance of sharing the riches of this love with those who do not yet know Christ through constant missionary activity.

The need to reaffirm this commitment has been felt even more forcefully in recent years, because in the modern epoch, as my beloved predecessor John Paul II observed, the *missio ad gentes* has sometimes seemed to be slowing down because of difficulties due to changes in humanity's anthropological, cultural, social and religious contexts.

Today, the Church is called to embrace new challenges and be ready to enter into dialogue with different cultures and religions, seeking with every person of good will to build peaceful coexistence between peoples.

Thus, the area of the *missio ad gentes* appears to have been considerably extended and cannot be defined solely on the basis of geographical or juridical considerations; indeed, the missionary activity of the People of God is not only intended for non-Christian peoples and distant lands, but above all for social and cultural contexts and hearts.

Carrying out this mandate faithfully demands patience and foresight, courage and humility, listening to God and alert discernment of the "signs of the times". The conciliar Decree *Ad Gentes* reveals the Church's awareness that, in order that "what was accomplished [by the Lord] for the salvation of all men may, in the course of time, achieve its universal effect" (n. 3), it is necessary to take the same way as Christ, a way that leads to death on the cross.

Indeed, evangelizing action "must walk the road Christ himself walked, a way of poverty and obedience, of service and self-sacrifice even to death, a death from which he emerged victorious..." (*ibid.*, n. 5). Yes! The Church is called to serve the humanity of our time by trusting in Jesus alone, by allowing herself to be illumined by his Word and imitating him in the generous gift of herself to his brethren. She is an instrument in his hands and therefore does what she can, conscious that the One who does everything is the Lord.

Dear brothers and sisters, thank you for the reflection you have developed in these days, deepening your knowledge of the content and style of missionary activity in our epoch and reflecting in particular on shedding light on the role of theology, which is also a systematic exposition of various aspects of the Church's mission.

With the contribution of all Christians, the proclamation of the Gospel will undoubtedly be ever more comprehensible and effective. May Mary, Star of Evangelization, help and sustain those in many regions of the world who work on the front lines of the Mission.

In this regard, how could one forget those who, also recently, have given their life for the Gospel? May their sacrifice obtain a renewed springtime, rich in apostolic fruit for evangelization. Let us pray for this, entrusting to the Lord all who in various ways work in the great vineyard of the Lord.

With these sentiments, I impart my Apostolic Blessing to you who are present here, and I cordially extend it to your loved ones and to the Ecclesial Communities to which you belong.

*Benedict XVI
Address to the participants of the International Conference on
occasion of the 40th anniversary of the
Conciliar Decree "Ad Gentes"
11 March 2006*

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AUGUST

AUGUST

That all those who are going through moments of inner difficulty and trial may find in Christ the light and support which leads them to discover authentic happiness.

Dear Young People,

I am delighted to meet you here in Cologne on the banks of the Rhine! You have come from various parts of Germany, Europe and the rest of the world as pilgrims in the footsteps of the Magi.

Following their route, you too want to find Jesus. Like them, you have begun this journey in order to contemplate, both personally and with others, the face of God revealed by the Child in the manger.

Like yourselves, I too have set out to join you in kneeling before the consecrated white Host in which the eyes of faith recognize the Real Presence of the Saviour of the world. Together, we will continue to meditate on the theme of this World Youth Day: "*We have come to worship him*" (Mt 2:2).

With great joy I welcome you, dear young people. You have come here from near and far, walking the streets of the world and the pathways of life. My particular greeting goes to those who, like the Magi, have come from the East. You are the representatives of so many of our brothers and sisters who are waiting, without realizing it, for the star to rise in their skies and lead them to Christ, Light of the Nations, in whom they will find the fullest response to their hearts' deepest desires.

I also greet with affection those among you who have not been baptized, and those of you who do not yet know Christ or have not yet found a home in his Church. Pope John Paul II had invited you in particular to come to this gathering; I thank you for deciding

to come to Cologne.

Some of you might perhaps describe your adolescence in the words with which Edith Stein, who later lived in the Carmel in Cologne, described her own: "I consciously and deliberately lost the habit of praying". During these days, you can once again have a moving experience of prayer as dialogue with God, the God who we know loves us and whom we in turn wish to love.

To all of you I appeal: Open wide your hearts to God! Let yourselves be surprised by Christ! Let him have "the right of free speech" during these days!

Open the doors of your freedom to his merciful love! Share your joys and pains with Christ, and let him enlighten your minds with his light and touch your hearts with his grace.

In these days blessed with sharing and joy, may you have a liberating experience of the Church as the place where God's merciful love reaches out to all people. In the Church and through the Church you will meet Christ, who is waiting for you.

Today, as I arrived in Cologne to take part with you in the 20th World Youth Day, I naturally recall with deep gratitude the Servant of God so greatly loved by us all, Pope John Paul II, who had the inspired idea of calling young people from all over the world to join in celebrating Christ, the one Redeemer of the human race. Thanks to the profound dialogue which developed over more than 20 years between the Pope and young people, many of them were able to deepen their faith, forge bonds of communion, develop a love for the Good News of salvation in Christ and a desire to proclaim it throughout the world.

That great Pope understood the challenges faced by young people today, and, as a sign of his trust in them, he did not hesitate

to spur them on to be courageous heralds of the Gospel and intrepid builders of the civilization of truth, love and peace.

Today, it is my turn to take up this extraordinary spiritual legacy bequeathed to us by Pope John Paul II. He loved you - you realized that and you returned his love with all your youthful enthusiasm. Now all of us together have to put his teaching into practice. It is this commitment which has brought us here to Cologne, as pilgrims in the footsteps of the Magi.

According to tradition, the names of the Magi in Greek were Melchior, Gaspar and Balthasar. Matthew, in his Gospel, tells of the question which burned in the hearts of the Magi: "Where is the infant king of the Jews?" (Mt 2:2). It was in order to search for him that they set out on the long journey to Jerusalem. This was why they withstood hardships and sacrifices, and never yielded to discouragement or the temptation to give up and go home. Now that they were close to their goal, they had no other question than this.

We too have come to Cologne because in our hearts we have the same urgent question that prompted the Magi from the East to set out on their journey, even if it is differently expressed.

It is true that today we are no longer looking for a king, but we are concerned for the state of the world and we are asking: "Where do I find standards to live by, what are the criteria that govern responsible cooperation in building the present and the future of our world? On whom can I rely? To whom shall I entrust myself? Where is the One who can offer me the response capable of satisfying my heart's deepest desires?".

The fact that we ask questions like these means that we realize our journey is not over until we meet the One who has the power to establish that universal Kingdom of justice and peace to which all people aspire, but which they are unable to build by themselves. Asking such questions also means searching for

Someone who can neither deceive nor be deceived, and who therefore can offer a certainty so solid that we can live for it and, if need be, even die for it.

Dear friends, when questions like these appear on the horizon of life, we must be able to make the necessary choices. It is like finding ourselves at a crossroads: which direction do we take? The one prompted by the passions or the one indicated by the star which shines in your conscience?

The Magi heard the answer: "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it is written by the prophet" (Mt 2:5), and, enlightened by these words, they chose to press forward to the very end. From Jerusalem they went on to Bethlehem. In other words, they went from the word which showed them where to find the King of the Jews whom they were seeking, all the way to the end, to an encounter with the King who was at the same time the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

Those words are also spoken for us. We too have a choice to make. If we think about it, this is precisely our experience when we share in the Eucharist. For in every Mass the liturgy of the Word introduces us to our participation in the mystery of the Cross and Resurrection of Christ and hence, introduces us to the Eucharistic Meal, to union with Christ. Present on the altar is the One whom the Magi saw lying in the manger: Christ, the living Bread who came down from heaven to give life to the world, the true Lamb who gives his own life for the salvation of humanity.

Enlightened by the Word, it is in Bethlehem - the "House of Bread" - that we can always encounter the inconceivable greatness of a God who humbled himself even to appearing in a manger, to giving himself as food on the altar.

We can imagine the awe which the Magi experienced before

the Child in swaddling clothes. Only faith enabled them to recognize in the face of that Child the King whom they were seeking, the God to whom the star had guided them. In him, crossing the abyss between the finite and the infinite, the visible and the invisible, the Eternal entered time, the Mystery became known by entrusting himself to us in the frail body of a small child.

"The Magi are filled with awe by what they see; heaven on earth and earth in heaven; man in God and God in man; they see enclosed in a tiny body the One whom the entire world cannot contain" (*Saint Peter Chrysologus*, Sermon 160, n. 2).

In these days, during this "Year of the Eucharist", we will turn with the same awe to Christ present in the Tabernacle of Mercy, in the Sacrament of the Altar.

Dear young people, the happiness you are seeking, the happiness you have a right to enjoy has a name and a face: it is Jesus of Nazareth, hidden in the Eucharist. Only he gives the fullness of life to humanity! With Mary, say your own "yes" to God, for he wishes to give himself to you.

I repeat today what I said at the beginning of my Pontificate: "If we let Christ into our lives, we lose nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing of what makes life free, beautiful and great. No! Only in this friendship are the doors of life opened wide. Only in this friendship is the great potential of human existence truly revealed. Only in this friendship do we experience beauty and liberation" (*Homily at the Mass of Inauguration*, 24 April 2005).

Be completely convinced of this: Christ takes from you nothing that is beautiful and great, but brings everything to perfection for the glory of God, the happiness of men and women, and the salvation of the world.

In these days I encourage you to commit yourselves without reserve to serving Christ, whatever the cost. The encounter with Jesus Christ will allow you to experience in your hearts the joy of his living and life-giving presence, and enable you to bear witness to it before others. Let your presence in this city be the first sign and proclamation of the Gospel, thanks to the witness of your actions and your joy.

Let us raise our hearts in a hymn of praise and thanksgiving to the Father for the many blessings he has given us and for the gift of faith which we will celebrate together, making it manifest to the world from this land in the heart of Europe, a Europe which owes so much to the Gospel and its witnesses down the centuries.

And now I shall go as a pilgrim to the Cathedral of Cologne, to venerate the relics of the holy Magi who left everything to follow the star which was guiding them to the Saviour of the human race. You too, dear young people, have already had, or will have, the opportunity to make the same pilgrimage.

These relics are only the poor and frail sign of what those men were and what they experienced so many centuries ago. The relics direct us towards God himself: it is he who, by the power of his grace, grants to weak human beings the courage to bear witness to him before the world.

By inviting us to venerate the mortal remains of the martyrs and saints, the Church does not forget that, in the end, these are indeed just human bones, but they are bones that belonged to individuals touched by the living power of God. The relics of the saints are traces of that invisible but real presence which sheds light upon the shadows of the world and reveals the Kingdom of Heaven in our midst. They cry out with us and for us: "Maranatha!" - "Come, Lord Jesus!"

My dear friends, I make these words my farewell, and I

invite you to the Saturday evening Vigil. I shall see you then!

*Benedict XVI
Apostolic Journey to Cologne on the occasion of the
XX World Youth Day - Celebration welcoming the Young People
18 August 2005*

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LITURGY – CELEBRATION

EUCCHARIST:

Mass for the Sacred Heart of Jesus (RM, Friday after the 2nd Sunday of Pentecost).

CELEBRATION OF THE WORD:

First reading: The Lord loves us: Dt 7:6-11.

Responsorial Psalm: The Lord is good and merciful: Ps 103 (102).

Second reading: God loved us and sent us his Son: 1Jn 4:7-16.

Gospel: Come to me all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest: Mt 11:25-30.

QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP REFLECTION

1. What does true happiness consist in?
2. Is faith in the Lord a part of this happiness?

3. Even when one suffers?

PRAYER - MEDITATION

The joyful homecoming

Isaiah 49:7-17

Thus says Yahweh, the redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, to the one who is despised, detested by the nations, to the slave of despots: Kings will stand up when they see, princes will see and bow low, because of Yahweh who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel who has chosen you.

Thus says Yahweh: At the time of my favour I have answered you, on the day of salvation I have helped you. I have formed you and have appointed you to be the covenant for a people, to restore the land, to return ravaged properties, to say to prisoners, "Come out", to those who are in darkness, "Show yourselves". Along the roadway they will graze, and any bare height will be their pasture. They will never hunger or thirst, scorching wind and sun will never plague them; for he who pities them will lead them, will guide them to springs of water. I shall turn all my mountains into a road and my highways will be raised aloft. Look! Here they come from far away, look, these from the north and the west, those from the land of Sinim.

Shout for joy, you heavens; earth, exult! Mountains, break into joyful cries! For Yahweh has consoled his people, is taking pity on his afflicted ones. Zion was saying, "Yahweh has abandoned me, the Lord has forgotten me". Can a woman forget her baby at the breast, feel no pity for the child she has borne? Even if these were to forget, I shall not forget you. Look, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands, your ramparts are ever before me. Your rebuilders are hurrying, your destroyers and despoilers will soon go

away.

MISSION INTENTION

That the Church in China may bear witness to ever greater inner cohesion and may manifest her effective and visible communion with Peter's Successor.

Dear and venerable Synod Fathers, for three weeks we have lived together an atmosphere of renewed Eucharistic fervour. Now I would like, with you and in the name of the entire Episcopacy, to extend a fraternal greeting to the Bishops of the Church in China.

With deep sorrow we felt the absence of their representatives. Nevertheless, I want to assure all of the Chinese Bishops that, in prayer, we are close to them and to their priests and faithful. The painful journey of the communities entrusted to their pastoral care is present in our heart: it does not remain fruitless, because it is a participation in the Paschal Mystery, to the glory of the Father.

The work of the Synod enabled us to deepen the important aspects of this mystery, given to the Church from the beginning. Contemplation of the Eucharist must urge all the members of the Church, priests in the first place, ministers of the Eucharist, to revive their commitment of faithfulness. The celibacy that priests have received as a precious gift and the sign of undivided love towards God and neighbour is founded upon the mystery of the Eucharist, celebrated and adored.

For lay persons too, Eucharistic spirituality must be the interior motor of every activity, and no dichotomy is acceptable between faith and life in their mission of spreading the spirit of Christianity in the world.

With the closing of the Year of the Eucharist, how can we not give thanks to God for the many gifts granted to the Church during this time? And how can we not take up once again the invitation of our beloved Pope John Paul II to "start afresh from Christ?".

Like the disciples of Emmaus, whose hearts were kindled by the words of the Risen One and enlightened by his living presence recognized in the breaking of the bread, who hurriedly returned to Jerusalem and became messengers of Christ's Resurrection, we too must take up the path again, enlivened by the fervent desire to witness to the mystery of this love that gives hope to the world.

Benedict XVI
Homily for the conclusion of 11th Ordinary General Assembly of
the Synod of Bishops and Year of the Eucharist
23 October 2005

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SEPTEMBER

SEPTEMBER

That the ecumenical assembly of Sibiu in Romania may contribute to the growth of unity among all Christians, for whom the Lord prayed at the Last Supper.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

On this day when we celebrate the Conversion of the Apostle Paul, we conclude the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity united in fraternal liturgical assembly. It is meaningful that the Feast of the Conversion of the Apostle to the Gentiles coincides with the final day of this important Week, in which we are asking God with particular intensity for the precious gift of unity among all Christians, making ours the invocation that Jesus himself raised to the Father for his disciples: "that they may all be one; even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (Jn 17:21).

The desire for unity on the part of every Christian Community and every individual believer and the power to achieve it is a gift of the Holy Spirit and goes hand in hand with a more profound and radical fidelity to the Gospel (cf. Encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*, n. 15). We realize that at the base of the commitment to ecumenism there is the conversion of heart, as the Second Vatican Council clearly affirms: "There can be no ecumenism worthy of the name without interior conversion. For it is from newness of attitudes of mind, from self-denial and unstinted love, that desires of unity take their rise and develop in a mature way" (Decree *Unitatis Redintegratio*, n. 7).

Deus caritas est (1Jn 4:8,16), God is love. The faith of the Church, in its entirety, is founded on this solid rock. In particular, the patient pursuit of full communion among all of Christ's disciples

is based upon it: by fixing one's gaze on this truth, summit of divine revelation, it seems possible to overcome divisions and not to be discouraged, even though they continue to be gravely serious.

The Lord Jesus, who broke down the "dividing wall of hostility" (Ep 2:14) with the blood of his Passion, will not fail to grant to those who faithfully invoke him the strength to heal every wound. But it is always necessary to start anew from this point: "*Deus caritas est*".

It is to the theme of love that I wanted to dedicate my first Encyclical, which was published today; this happy coincidence with the conclusion of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity invites us to consider, even more than our gathering together, the entire ecumenical journey in the light of God's love, of the Love that is God.

If, under the human profile, love manifests itself as an invincible force, what must we, who "*know and believe the love God has for us*" (1Jn 4:16), say?

True love does not eliminate legitimate differences, but harmonizes them in a superior unity that is not ordered from the *outside* but gives form from *within*, so to speak, to the whole.

As the mystery of communion unites man and woman in that community of love and life known as matrimony, it too forms the Church into a community of love, uniting a multiform wealth of gifts and traditions. The Church of Rome is placed at the service of that unity of love which, according to a saying by Saint Ignatius of Antioch, "*presides in charity*" (*Ad Rom* 1,1).

Before you, dear brothers and sisters, I wish to renew today the entrustment to God of my particular Petrine ministry, invoking

upon it the light and power of the Holy Spirit so that it will always encourage fraternal communion among all Christians.

The theme of love profoundly links the two short biblical readings of today's Liturgy of Vespers.

In the first, divine charity is the strength that transforms the life of Saul of Tarsus and makes him the Apostle to the Gentiles. Writing to the Christians at Corinth, Saint Paul confesses that God's grace worked the extraordinary event of conversion in him: "By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain" (1Co 15:10).

On the one hand, he feels the weight of having hindered the spread of Christ's message; but on the other, he lives in the joy of having met the Risen Lord and having been enlightened and transformed by his light. He keeps a constant memory of that life-changing event, an event so important for the entire Church that in the Acts of the Apostles reference is made to it three times (cf. Ac 9:3-9; 22:6-11; 26:12-18).

On the road to Damascus, Saul hears the disturbing question: "Why do you persecute me?". Falling to the ground and interiorly troubled, he asked: "Who are you, Lord?", receiving that answer which is the basis of his conversion: "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting" (Ac 9:4-5). Paul understood in an instant what he would later express in his writings: that the Church forms a single body of which Christ is the Head. And so, from a persecutor of Christians he became the Apostle to the Gentiles.

In the Gospel passage of Matthew that we heard a little while ago, love acts as the principle that unites Christians and guarantees that their unanimous prayer is heard by the Heavenly

Father. Jesus says: "If two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven" (Mt 18:19).

The word that the Evangelist uses for "agree" is *synphonesosin*: there is reference made to a "symphony" of hearts. This he took from the heart of God. Agreement in prayer is therefore important as it is welcomed by the Heavenly Father. Asking together already marks a step towards unity between those who ask. This certainly does not mean that God's answer is in some way determined by our request. We know well: the hoped-for fulfilment of unity depends in the first place on the will of God, whose plan and generosity surpass the understanding of man and his own requests and expectations.

Relying precisely on divine goodness, let us intensify our common prayer for unity, which is more than ever a necessary and very effective means, as John Paul II reminded us in the Encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*: "Along the ecumenical path to unity, pride of place certainly belongs to common prayer, the prayerful union of those who gather together around Christ himself" (n. 22).

Analyzing these passages in greater depth, we understand better the reason why the Father responds positively to the request of the Christian Community: "For", Jesus says, "where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them".

It is the presence of Christ that makes the common prayer of those gathered in his Name effective. When Christians gather to pray together, Jesus himself is in their midst. They are one with Christ, who is the only mediator between God and man.

The Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy refers precisely to this Gospel passage to indicate one of the ways that Christ is present: "He is present when the Church prays and sings, for he has promised "where two or three are gathered

together in my name there am I in the midst of them' (Mt 18:20)" (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 7).

Commenting on this text of the Evangelist Matthew, Saint John Chrysostom asks: "Well then, are there not two or three who gather in his name? There are", he responds, "but rarely" (*Homily on the Gospel of Saint Matthew*, 60,3).

This evening I experience an immense joy in seeing such a large and prayerful assembly that implores the gift of unity in harmony.

To each and all I extend my cordial greeting. I greet with particular affection the brothers of the other Churches and Ecclesial Communities of this City, united in the one Baptism that makes us members of the one Mystical Body of Christ.

Forty years have passed since, in this very Basilica on 5 December 1965, the Servant of God Paul VI, of happy memory, celebrated the first common prayer at the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council with the solemn presence of the Council Fathers and the active participation of the Observers of the other Churches and Ecclesial Communities.

Following this, beloved John Paul II persevered in the tradition of closing the Week of Prayer here. I am certain that this evening both of them are looking down from Heaven and joining in our prayer.

Among those who are taking part in this assembly I would especially like to greet and thank the group of Delegates from Churches, Episcopal Conferences, Christian Communities and Ecumenical Organizations that are beginning to prepare for the Third European Ecumenical Assembly to be held in Sibiu, Romania,

in September 2007 on the theme: *"The light of Christ shines upon all. Hope for renewal and unity in Europe"*.

Yes, dear brothers and sisters, we Christians have the duty to be, in Europe and among all peoples, the "light of the world" (Mt 5:14). May God grant us a quick arrival at the hoped-for full communion.

The reformation of our unity will make evangelization more effective. Unity is our common mission; it is the condition that enables the light of Christ to be spread better in every corner of the world, so that men and women convert and are saved.

The road stretches before us! And yet, we must not lose trust; instead, with greater vigour we must once more continue our journey together. Christ walks before us and accompanies us. We count on his unfailing presence and humbly and tirelessly implore from him the precious gift of unity and peace.

Benedict XVI
Homily on the Feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul
for the conclusion of prayer for Christian Unity
25 January 2006

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LITURGY – CELEBRATION

EUCCHARIST:

Mass for the unity of Christians (RM, Masses for various needs).

CELEBRATION OF THE WORD:

First reading: I shall take you from among the nations and give you a new heart: Ezk 36:24-28.

Responsorial Psalm: The Lord is my shepherd: Ps 23 (22).

Second reading: Let there be no divisions among you: 1Co 1:10-13.

Gospel: Only one flock and only one Shepherd: Jn 10:11-16.

**QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL
AND GROUP REFLECTION**

1. Why is the unity of Christians so important to the Lord?
2. What attitude is most favourable to this unity?
3. How can we take this unity to heart in our daily life?

PRAYER - MEDITATION

A call to unity

Ephesians 4:1-16

I, the prisoner in the Lord, urge you therefore to lead a life

worthy of the vocation to which you were called. With all humility and gentleness, and with patience, support each other in love. Take every care to preserve the unity of the Spirit by the peace that binds you together. There is one Body, one Spirit, just as one hope is the goal of your calling by God. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all, over all, through all and within all.

On each one of us God's favour has been bestowed in whatever way Christ allotted it. That is why it says: *He went up to the heights, took captives, he gave gifts to humanity.*

When it says, "he went up", it must mean that he had gone down to the deepest levels of the earth. The one who went down is none other than the one who went up above all the heavens to fill all things. And to some, his "gift" was that they should be apostles; to some prophets; to some, evangelists; to some pastors and teachers; to knit God's holy people together for the work of service to build up the Body of Christ, until we all reach unity in faith and knowledge of the Son of God and form the perfect Man fully mature with the fullness of Christ himself.

Then we shall no longer be children, or tossed one way and another, and carried hither and thither by every new gust of teaching, at the mercy of all the tricks people play and their unscrupulousness in deliberate deception. If we live by the truth and in love, we shall grow completely into Christ, who is the head by whom the whole Body is fitted and joined together, every joint adding its own strength, for each individual part to work according to its function. So the body grows until it has built itself up in love.

MISSION INTENTION

That, following Christ joyfully, all missionaries may know how to overcome the difficulties they meet in everyday life.

Contemplation of the Eucharist must urge all the members of the Church, priests in the first place, ministers of the Eucharist, to revive their commitment of faithfulness. The celibacy that priests have received as a precious gift and the sign of undivided love towards God and neighbour is founded upon the mystery of the Eucharist, celebrated and adored.

For lay persons too, Eucharistic spirituality must be the interior motor of every activity, and no dichotomy is acceptable between faith and life in their mission of spreading the spirit of Christianity in the world.

With the closing of the Year of the Eucharist, how can we not give thanks to God for the many gifts granted to the Church during this time? And how can we not take up once again the invitation of our beloved Pope John Paul II to "start afresh from Christ?".

Like the disciples of Emmaus, whose hearts were kindled by the words of the Risen One and enlightened by his living presence recognized in the breaking of the bread, who hurriedly returned to Jerusalem and became messengers of Christ's Resurrection, we too must take up the path again, enlivened by the fervent desire to witness to the mystery of this love that gives hope to the world.

It is in this Eucharistic perspective that today's World Mission Sunday is well situated, to which the venerated Servant of God John Paul II gave as the theme for reflection: *Mission: bread broken for the life of the world.*

When the Ecclesial Community celebrates the Eucharist, especially on Sunday, the Day of the Lord, it better understands that Christ's sacrifice is "for all" (Mt 26:28), and that the Eucharist urges Christians to be "bread broken" for others, to commit themselves to a more just and fraternal world.

Even today, faced with the crowds, Christ continues to exhort his disciples: "Give them something to eat yourselves" (Mt 14:16), and in his Name, missionaries proclaim and witness to the Gospel, sometimes with the sacrifice of their lives.

Dear friends, we must all start afresh from the Eucharist. Mary, Woman of the Eucharist, will help us to "fall in love" with it, she will help us to "remain" in Christ's love, to be deeply renewed by him.

Docile to the Spirit's action and attentive to the needs of others, the Church will be evermore a beacon of light, of true joy and hope, fully achieving its mission as "sign and instrument... of unity among all men" (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 1).

Benedict XVI

*Homily for the conclusion of the 11th Ordinary General Assembly
of the Synod of Bishops and Year of the Eucharist
23 October 2005*

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OCTOBER

OCTOBER

That the Christians who are in minority situations may have the strength and courage to live their faith and persevere in bearing witness to it.

Dear Brother Bishops,

1. "Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity" (Ps 133:1). In this spirit of harmony I welcome you, the Bishops of South Africa, Botswana, Swaziland, Namibia and Lesotho, with joy and affection. Through you I extend my warm greetings to the clergy, religious and laity in your countries. In this year dedicated to the Eucharist you are blessed to make your solemn visit *ad limina apostolorum*. "The Eucharist, the heart of Christian life and the source of the Church's evangelizing mission, cannot but constitute the permanent centre and source of the Petrine Ministry" (*Message at the Missa Pro Ecclesia*, 20 April 2005, 4). Likewise, it must always be at the heart of your Episcopal ministry and an inspiration to those who assist you in your sacred task.

2. Communion with Christ is the unfailing source of every element of ecclesial life - "first of all communion among all the faithful, the commitment to proclaiming and witnessing to the Gospel, the ardour of love for all, especially the poorest and lowliest" (*ibid.*). Catholics in your region constitute a minority. This presents many challenges which require dedication on the part of the Church to tend the flock effectively and, at the same time, remain faithful to her missionary commitment. For this reason it is essential that the bishops promote the crucial work of catechesis in order to ensure that God's people are truly prepared to witness by word and deed to the authentic teaching of the Gospel. As I look at the Church in Africa, and at all that has been accomplished there over the last century, I give thanks to our Heavenly Father for the many priests, religious and lay men and women who have given their lives to this

noble task. Bishops have a particular responsibility to ensure that these "irreplaceable evangelizers" are provided with the necessary spiritual, doctrinal and moral preparation (cf. *Ecclesia in Africa*, 91).

3. Even though your region still needs more priests, one cannot help but thank God for the large number of vocations to the priesthood you are currently witnessing in Sub-Saharan Africa. As Shepherds of Christ's flock, it is your grave responsibility to help them develop into men of the Eucharist. Priests are called to leave everything and become ever more devoted to the Blessed Sacrament, leading men and women to this mystery and the peace it brings (cf. *Homily Pentecost Sunday 2005*). I encourage you, therefore, in your ongoing efforts to select conscientiously candidates for the priesthood. Likewise these young men should be formed with great concern to guarantee that they are prepared for the many challenges they will face, helping them manifest in word and deed the peace and joy of our Lord and Saviour. A world filled with temptations needs priests who are totally dedicated to their mission. Accordingly, they are asked in a very special way to open themselves fully to serving others as Christ did by embracing the gift of celibacy. Bishops should assist them by ensuring that this gift never becomes a burden but always remains life-giving. One of the ways this can be achieved is by bringing ministers of word and sacrament together for continuing education, retreats and days of recollection.

4. Family life has always been a unifying characteristic of African society. In fact, it is within the "domestic Church", "built on the solid cultural pillar and noble values of the African tradition of the family", that children first learn of the centrality of the Eucharist in Christian life (cf. *Ecclesia in Africa*, 92). It is of great concern that the fabric of African life, its very source of hope and stability, is threatened by divorce, abortion, prostitution, human trafficking and a contraceptive mentality, all of which contribute to a breakdown in

sexual morality. Brother Bishops, I share your deep concern over the devastation caused by AIDS and related diseases. I especially pray for the widows, the orphans, the young mothers and all those whose lives have been shattered by this cruel epidemic. I urge you to continue your efforts to fight this virus which not only kills but seriously threatens the economic and social stability of the Continent. The Catholic Church has always been at the forefront both in prevention and in treatment of this illness. The traditional teaching of the Church has proven to be the only failsafe way to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS. For this reason, "the companionship, joy, happiness and peace which Christian marriage and fidelity provide, and the safeguard which chastity gives, must be continuously presented to the faithful, particularly the young" (*Ecclesia in Africa*, 116).

5. Dear Brothers, as we continue to celebrate a year devoted to the Holy Eucharist, I pray that you will be sustained by the Lord's promise - "I am with you always" (Mt 28:19). May your witness as men filled with Eucharistic hope help your flocks to arrive at an ever-greater appreciation of this Mystery. To each of you and to all those under your pastoral care, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing.

Benedict XVI
Address to the Bishops of South Africa, Botswana, Swaziland,
Namibia and Lesotho on their "Ad Limina Apostolorum" visit
10 June 2005

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LITURGY – CELEBRATION

EUCCHARIST:

Ritual Mass for Confirmation (RM, ritual Masses).

CELEBRATION OF THE WORD:

First reading: You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and then you will be my witnesses: Ac 1:3-8.

Responsorial Psalm: Send your Spirit, Lord, that it may renew the earth: Ps 104(103):27-35.

Second reading: The love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit: Rm 5:1-2.5-8.

Gospel: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me: Lk 4:16-22.

QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP REFLECTION

1. Do you have the impression that you sometimes or always find yourselves, as Christians, in a minority situation in your country?
2. What helps you live your faith in these situations?
3. Where do you find the strength to perseveringly bear witness to it?

PRAYER - MEDITATION

Children of God
Romans 7:14-28

All who are guided by the Spirit of God are sons of God; for what you received was not the spirit of slavery to bring you back into fear; you received the spirit of adoption, enabling us to cry out, "Abba, Father!" The Spirit himself joins with our spirit to bear witness that we are children of God. And if we are children, then we are heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, provided that we share his suffering, so as share his glory.

In my estimation, all that we suffer in the present time is nothing in comparison with the glory which is destined to be disclosed for us, for the whole creation is waiting with eagerness for the children of God to be revealed. It was not for its own purposes that creation had frustration imposed on it, but for the purposes of him who imposed it - with the intention that the whole creation itself might be freed from its slavery to corruption and brought into the same glorious freedom as the children of God. We are well aware that the whole creation, until this time, has been groaning in labour pains. And not only that: we too, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we are groaning inside ourselves, waiting with eagerness for our bodies to be set free. In hope, we already have salvation; in hope, not visibly present, or we should not be hoping - nobody goes on hoping for something which he can already see. But having this hope for what we cannot yet see, we are able to wait for it with persevering confidence.

And as well as this, the Spirit too comes to help us in our weakness, for, when we not know how to pray properly, then the Spirit personally makes our petitions for us in groans that cannot be put into words; and he who can see into all hearts knows what the Spirit means because the prayers that the Spirit makes for God's holy people are always in accordance with the mind of God.

MISSION INTENTION

That World Missionary Day may be a propitious occasion for kindling an ever greater missionary awareness in every baptized person.

Cooperation in missionary activity

77. Since they are members of the Church by virtue of their Baptism, all Christians share responsibility for missionary activity. "Missionary cooperation" is the expression used to describe the sharing by communities and individual Christians in this right and duty.

Missionary cooperation is rooted and lived, above all, in personal union with Christ. Only if we are united to him as the branches to the vine (cf. Jn 15:5) can we produce good fruit. Through holiness of life every Christian can become a fruitful part of the Church's mission. The Second Vatican Council invited all "to a profound interior renewal, so that having a lively awareness of their personal responsibility for the spreading of the Gospel, they may play their part in missionary work among the nations" (Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, 35; cf. *CIC*, cc. 211, 781).

Sharing in the universal mission therefore is not limited to certain specific activities, but is the sign of maturity in faith and of a Christian life that bears fruit. In this way, individual believers extend the reach of their charity and show concern for those both far and near. They pray for the missions and missionary vocations. They help missionaries and follow their work with interest. And when missionaries return, they welcome them with the same joy with which the first Christian communities heard from the apostles the marvellous things which God had wrought through their preaching (cf. Ac 14:27).

Prayer and Sacrifice for Missionaries

78. Among the forms of sharing, first place goes to spiritual cooperation through prayer, sacrifice and the witness of Christian life. Prayer should accompany the journey of missionaries so that the proclamation of the word will be effective through God's grace. In his Letters, Saint Paul often asks the faithful to pray for him so that he might proclaim the Gospel with confidence and conviction. Prayer needs to be accompanied by sacrifice. The redemptive value of suffering, accepted and offered to God with love, derives from the sacrifice of Christ himself, who calls the members of his Mystical Body to share in his sufferings, to complete them in their own flesh (cf. Col 1:24). The sacrifice of missionaries should be shared and accompanied by the sacrifices of all the faithful. I therefore urge those engaged in the pastoral care of the sick to teach them about the efficacy of suffering, and to encourage them to offer their sufferings to God for missionaries. By making such an offering, the sick themselves become missionaries, as emphasized by a number of movements which have sprung up among them and for them. The solemnity of Pentecost - the beginning of the Church's mission - is celebrated in some communities as a "Day of Suffering for the Missions."

(...)

"It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Ac 20:35)

81. The material and financial needs of the missions are many: not only to set up the Church with minimal structures (chapels, schools for catechists and seminarians, housing), but also to support works of charity, education and human promotion - a vast field of action especially in poor countries. The missionary Church gives what she receives, and distributes to the poor the material goods that her materially richer sons and daughters generously put at her disposal. Here I wish to thank all those who make sacrifices and contribute to the work of the missions. Their sacrifices and sharing are indispensable for building up the Church and for showing love.

In the matter of material help, it is important to consider the spirit in which donations are made. For this we should reassess our own way of living: the missions ask not only for a contribution but for a sharing in the work of preaching and charity toward the poor. All that we have received from God - life itself as well as material goods - does not belong to us but is given to us for our use. Generosity in giving must always be enlightened and inspired by faith: then we will truly be more blessed in giving than in receiving.

World Mission Day, which seeks to heighten awareness of the missions, as well as to collect funds for them, is an important date in the life of the Church, because it teaches how to give: as an offering made to God, *in* the Eucharistic celebration and *for* all the missions of the world.

John Paul II
Redemptoris missio
7 December 1990

NOVEMBER

NOVEMBER

That those dedicated to medical research and all those engaged in legislative activity may always have deep respect for human life, from its beginning to its natural conclusion.

Indeed, the study topic chosen for your Assembly, "*The human embryo in the pre-implantation phase*", that is, in the very first days subsequent to conception, is an extremely important issue today, both because of the obvious repercussions on philosophical-anthropological and ethical thought, and also because of the prospects applicable in the context of the biomedical and juridical sciences.

It is certainly a fascinating topic, however difficult and demanding it may be, given the delicate nature of the subject under examination and the complexity of the epistemological problems that concern the relationship between the revelation of facts at the level of the experimental sciences and the consequent, necessary anthropological reflection on values.

As it is easy to see, neither Sacred Scripture nor the oldest Christian Tradition can contain any explicit treatment of your theme. Saint Luke, nevertheless, testifies to the active, though hidden, presence of the two infants. He recounts the meeting of the Mother of Jesus, who had conceived him in her virginal womb only a few days earlier, with the mother of John the Baptist, who was already in the sixth month of her pregnancy: "When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leapt in her womb" (Lk 1:41).

Saint Ambrose comments: Elizabeth "perceived the arrival of Mary, he (John) perceived the arrival of the Lord, the woman, the arrival of the Woman, the child, the arrival of the Child" (*Comm. in Luc. 2:19,22-26*).

Even in the absence of explicit teaching on the very first

days of life of the unborn child, it is possible to find valuable information in Sacred Scripture that elicits sentiments of admiration and respect for the newly conceived human being, especially in those who, like you, are proposing to study the mystery of human procreation.

The sacred books, in fact, set out to show God's love for every human being even before he has been formed in his mother's womb.

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you" (Jr 1:5), God said to the Prophet Jeremiah. And the Psalmist recognizes with gratitude: "You did form my inward parts, you did knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for you are fearful and wonderful. Wonderful are your works! You know me right well" (Ps 139[138]:13-14).

These words acquire their full, rich meaning when one thinks that God intervenes directly in the creation of the soul of every new human being.

God's love does not differentiate between the newly conceived infant still in his or her mother's womb and the child or young person, or the adult and the elderly person. God does not distinguish between them because he sees an impression of his own image and likeness (Gn 1:26) in each one.

He makes no distinctions because he perceives in all of them a reflection of the face of his Only-begotten Son, whom "he chose... before the foundation of the world.... He destined us in love to be his sons... according to the purpose of his will" (Ep 1:4-6).

This boundless and almost incomprehensible love of God for the human being reveals the degree to which the human person deserves to be loved in himself, independently of any other consideration - intelligence, beauty, health, youth, integrity, and so

forth. In short, human life is always a good, for it "is a manifestation of God in the world, a sign of his presence, a trace of his glory" (*Evangelium Vitae*, n. 34).

Indeed, the human person has been endowed with a very exalted dignity, which is rooted in the intimate bond that unites him with his Creator: a reflection of God's own reality shines out in the human person, in every person, whatever the stage or condition of his life.

Therefore, the Magisterium of the Church has constantly proclaimed the sacred and inviolable character of every human life from its conception until its natural end (cf. *ibid.*, n. 57). This moral judgment also applies to the origins of the life of an embryo even before it is implanted in the mother's womb, which will protect and nourish it for nine months until the moment of birth: "Human life is sacred and inviolable at every moment of existence, including the initial phase which precedes birth" (*ibid.*, n. 61).

I know well, dear students of nature, with what sentiments of wonder and profound respect for the human being you carry out your demanding and fruitful work of research precisely on the origin of human life itself. It is a mystery on whose significance science will be increasingly able to shed light, even if it will be difficult to decipher it completely. Indeed, as soon as reason succeeds in overcoming a limit deemed insurmountable, it will be challenged by other limits as yet unknown. Man will always remain a deep and impenetrable enigma.

In the fourth century, Saint Cyril of Jerusalem already offered the following reflection to the catechumens who were preparing to receive Baptism: "Who prepared the cavity of the womb for the procreation of children? Who breathed life into the inanimate fetus within it? Who knit us together with bones and sinews and clothed us with skin and flesh (cf. Jb 10:11), and as soon as the child is born, causes the breast to produce an abundance of

milk? How is it that the child, in growing, becomes an adolescent, and from an adolescent is transformed into a young man, then an adult and finally an old man, without anyone being able to identify the precise day on which the change occurred?". And he concluded: "O Man, you are seeing the Craftsman you are seeing the wise Creator" (*Catechesi Battesimale*, 9:15-16).

At the beginning of the third millennium these considerations still apply. They are addressed not so much to the physical or physiological phenomenon as rather to its anthropological and metaphysical significance. We have made enormous headway in our knowledge and have defined more clearly the limits of our ignorance but it always seems too arduous for human intelligence to realize that in looking at creation, we encounter the impression of the Creator.

In fact, those who love the truth, like you, dear students of nature, should perceive that research on such profound topics places us in the condition of seeing and, as it were, touching the hand of God. Beyond the limits of experimental methods, beyond the boundaries of the sphere which some call meta-analysis, wherever the perception of the senses no longer suffices or where neither the perception of the senses alone nor scientific verification is possible, begins the adventure of transcendence, the commitment to "go beyond" them.

Dear researchers and experts, I hope you will be more and more successful, not only in examining the reality that is the subject of your endeavour, but also in contemplating it in such a way that, together with your discoveries, questions will arise that lead to discovering in the beauty of creatures a reflection of the Creator.

In this context, I am eager to express my appreciation and gratitude to the Pontifical Academy for Life for its valuable work of "study, formation and information" which benefits the Dicasteries of the Holy See, the local Churches and students of nature attentive to

what the Church proposes on their terrain of scientific research and on human life in its relations with ethics and law. Because of the urgency and importance of these problems, I consider the foundation of this Institution by my venerable Predecessor, John Paul II, providential. I therefore desire to express with sincere cordiality to all of you, the personnel and the members of the Pontifical Academy for Life, my closeness and support.

With these sentiments, as I entrust your work to Mary's protection, I impart the Apostolic Blessing to you all.

Benedict XVI

Address to the participants of its 12th General Assembly of the Pontifical Academy for life and Congress on "The human embryo in the preimplantation phase", 27 February 2006

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LITURGY – CELEBRATION

EUCCHARIST:

Mass to ask for the grace of a good death (RM, Masses for various needs).

CELEBRATION OF THE WORD:

First reading: The Lord will remove death forever: Is 25:6-10.

Responsorial Psalm: Father, I place my life in your hands: Ps 30.

Second reading: Alive or dead we belong to the Lord: Rm 14:7-9.10-12.

Gospel: The bridegroom is here, go out to meet him: Mt 25:1-13.

QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP REFLECTION

1. Why is respect for life so important?
2. Where this respect is lacking who are the first victims?

3. How do we show respect for our own lives?

PRAYER - MEDITATION

In praise of God's omniscience

Psalm 139:1-19

Yahweh, you examine me and know me, you know when I sit, when I rise, you understand my thoughts from afar. You watch when I walk or lie down, you know every detail of my conduct.

A word is not yet on my tongue before you, Yahweh, know all about it. You fence me in, behind and in front, you have laid your hand upon me, a height to which I cannot attain.

Where shall I go to escape your spirit? Where shall I flee from your presence? If I scale the heavens you are there, if I lie flat in Sheol, there you are. If I speed away on the wings of the dawn, if I dwell beyond the ocean, even there your hand will be guiding me, your right hand holding me fast. I will say, "Let the darkness cover me, and the night wrap itself around me, even darkness to you is not dark, and night is as clear as the day.

You created my inmost self, knit me together in my mother's womb. For so many marvels I thank you; a wonder am I, and all your works are wonders.

You knew me through and through, my being held no secrets from you, when I was being formed in secret, textured in the depths of the earth. Your eyes could see my embryo. In your book all my days were inscribed, every one that was fixed is there. How hard for me to grasp your thoughts, how many, God, there are! If I count them, they are more than the grains of sand; if I come to an end, I am still with you.

MISSION INTENTION

That in the Korean Peninsula the spirit of reconciliation and peace may grow.

1. The Internal Hopes and Expectations of the Church

The Korean Church expects and desires, first of all, to rediscover its true identity and to be reborn as the Church of the salt of the earth and the light which illuminates the world through the great event of the Jubilee of the Year 2,000. We expect that each member of the Church to be reborn as a true Christian to announce that Jesus is truly the Saviour for those who have yet to confess that Jesus is the Christ and that each person will become the protagonist of the new evangelization in order to transmit the joy of faith in Christ.

For this, we hope that each member of the Church will strongly reflect on their own life and their spiritual position during the period of preparation for the Great Jubilee. In this way, we desire that within the Church the clerics, the religious and the laity will renew the knowledge of the ministry received and encourage the promotion of vocations in order to build the Kingdom of God in whatever situations we find ourselves. We also hope that each diocese and the Korean Church present the plan of living in the third millennium through the process of preparation for the Jubilee and through the Synod which each diocese is currently starting. We hope that everyone will proceed from materialism to life, "towards the heavens", and that faith will be re-invigorated.

2. The Hopes and the Expectations for Society

The Korean Church hopes the great event, the Great Jubilee of the Year 2,00 will not remain within the confines of the Church.

The Church must open itself to the world because it must be for the world. We desire that the Catholic Church will offer salvation, joy, and hope to non-Christians who will witness the celebration of the incarnation of the Saviour of the Year 2,000. We also hope that the Korean Church, which is only 8% Catholic, will be transformed in the spirit of the Jubilee. For this reason, we are trying to renew the society through some movements, financed by special Agencies of publicity, which help us to recuperate the identity of everyone, to encourage everyone to renew the world and adjust the economic situation. We hope that this Jubilee will become an occasion to reflect on the importance and on the beauty of the human being and that it will illuminate the spirit of culture and of the life of Koreans who, for many decades have given more importance to economic development and to the search for material goods instead of the values of the spirit. We also hope that these social movements will help build a society of justice where no one is alienated and where we all have the same freedom, the same rights and where we learn to appreciate and preserve nature, a gift from the Creator.

The greatest hope for Koreans is the reunification of North Korea with South Korea. If North and South can reunite through the heart of reconciliation, the meaning of the Jubilee will be the year of joy and of liberation for our nation.

Joseph Kyeong
Bishop of Taejòn
1998

DECEMBER

DECEMBER

That human society may be solicitous in the care of all those stricken with AIDS, especially children and women, and that the Church may make them feel the Lord's love.

The World Day against AIDS of this year, organized by UNAIDS with the slogan "Stop AIDS: Keep the promise", seeks to call everyone, and in particular those who occupy positions of responsibility in the field of HIV/AIDS, to a renewed and conscious commitment to the lasting prevention of the spread of this pandemic and to care for those afflicted by it, especially in poor countries, in order to stem and invert the trend towards the growing spread of infection by HIV/AIDS.

The Pontifical Council for Health Pastoral Care joins with other national and international organizations, and in particular UNAIDS, which every year organizes a world campaign of combating AIDS, so that this planetary evil, which has brought about a global crisis, can be met with an action that is equally global and united. The adherence in 2001 of Heads of State and representatives of Governments to the Declaration of commitment to the struggle against HIV/AIDS was an important moment of affirming awareness and political commitment at a world level in favour of a strong, global and decisive reaction and response by the international community.

The epidemiological situation of HIV/AIDS continues to rouse great concern. It is estimated that in 2005 the number of people living with AIDS was 40.3 million, of whom 2.3 million were minors under the age of 15. Year by year the number of people infected by this disease continues to grow. In 2005, 4.9 million people contracted the HIV virus, of whom 700,000 were minors under the age of 15, and in 2005 3.1 million people died of AIDS, of whom 570,000 were young people under the age of 15. HIV/AIDS

continues to sow death in all the countries of the world.

The best cure is prevention to avoid infection by HIV/AIDS, which we should remember is transmitted through the triple route of blood, transmission from mother to child and sexual contact.

As regards transfusions and other forms of contact with the blood of an infected person, today such infection has been notably reduced. Despite this fact, the very greatest attention should be paid to avoid this pathway of infection, especially in centres that deal with transfusions and during surgical operations.

We may thank the Lord that contagion from mother to child is strongly controlled by suitable drugs. Prevention in this field must be intensified through the provision of suitable medication to sero-positive mothers, especially by public bodies in the various countries of the world.

The third pathway of infection - sexual transmission - still remains the most important. This is greatly fostered by a kind of pansexual culture that devalues sexuality, reducing it to mere pleasure without any further meaning. Radical prevention in this field must come from a correct conception and practice of sexuality, where sexual activity is understood in its deep meaning as a total and absolute expression of the fecund giving of love. This totality leads us to the exclusiveness of its exercise in marriage, which is unique and indissoluble. Secure prevention in this field thus lies in the intensification of the solidity of the family. This is the profound meaning of the Sixth Commandment of the law of God, which constitutes the fulcrum of the authentic prevention of AIDS in the field of sexual activity.

Faced with the difficult social, cultural and economic situation in which many countries find themselves, there can be no doubt that a defence and promotion of health is required that is a sign of the unconditional love of everyone, in particular for the

poorest and the weakest, and which meets the human needs of every individual and the community.

As a result, those laws that do not take into sufficient consideration the equal distribution of conditions of health for everyone must be reformed.

Health is a good in itself and we can say that "there weighs upon it a social mortgage". Thus, health must be assured to all the inhabitants of the earth, and studies must be engaged in so that resources are used to achieve health for everyone by ensuring the basic care and treatment that are still denied to the majority of the population of the world. The right to the defence of health must, however, be matched by the duty to implement forms of behaviour and to follow lifestyles that are directed to defending health and to reject those that compromise health.

The Catholic Church continues to make her contribution both as regards prevention and in caring for people afflicted by HIV/AIDS and their families at the level of medical care and assistance and at the social, spiritual and pastoral levels.

A total of 26.7 percent of centres for the provision of care in relation to HIV/AIDS in the world are Catholic based. Local Churches, religious institutions and lay associations have promoted very many projects and programmes dealing with training and education, prevention and assistance, care and the pastoral accompanying of sick people, with love, a sense of responsibility and a spirit of charity.

At a practical level, on the basis of the information that comes from the various local Churches and Catholic institutions in the world, the actions that are engaged in the field of AIDS may be categorized in the following way: the promotion of campaigns of sensitization, programmes of prevention and health-care education, support for orphans, the distribution of medicaments and food, home

care, the creation of hospitals, centres and therapeutic communities that concentrate their work around the provision of care and assistance for people afflicted by HIV/AIDS, working with governments, care in prisons, courses of catechesis, the creation of systems of help through Internet, and the establishment of support groups for sick people.

Flanking this inestimable and praiseworthy endeavour, on 12 September 2004 Pope John Paul II created the "Good Samaritan" Foundation, which was entrusted to the Pontifical Council for Health Pastoral Care and subsequently confirmed by Pope Benedict XVI, in order to bring economic help, thanks to the donations that are received, to the sick people who are most in need in the world, and in particular to the victims of HIV/AIDS.

During this first year of activity of the Foundation significant financial help to purchase pharmaceuticals has been sent to the local Churches in America, Asia, Africa and Europe.

Concrete guidelines for action

I would like to offer certain suggestions at the level of guidelines for action to those who are involved at various levels in the fight against HIV/AIDS:

To Christian communities: that they may continue to promote the stability of the family and the education of children in a correct understanding of sexual activity as a gift of God for self-giving that is lovingly full and fertile.

To governments: that they may promote the overall health of their populations and foster care for AIDS patients, basing themselves on the principles of responsibility, solidarity, justice and fairness.

To the pharmaceutical industries: that they may facilitate

economic access to anti-viral pharmaceuticals for the treatment of HIV/AIDS and those pharmaceuticals that are needed to treat opportunistic infections.

To scientists and health-care workers: that they may renew their solidarity and do everything they can to advance biomedical research into HIV/AIDS in order to find new and effective pharmaceuticals that are able to stem the phenomenon.

To the mass media: that they may provide transparent, correct and truthful information to populations on this phenomenon and on methods for its prevention, without forms of exploitation.

I would like to conclude with the words which Pope Benedict XVI addressed to the Bishops of South Africa during their *ad limina* visit on 10 June 2005: "Brother Bishops, I share your deep concern over the devastation caused by AIDS and related diseases. I especially pray for the widows, the orphans, the young mothers and those whose lives have been shattered by this cruel epidemic. I urge you to continue your efforts to fight this virus, which not only kills but seriously threatens the economic and social stability of the Continent".

*Pontifical Council for Health Pastoral Care
Message of Cardinal Javier Lozano Barragán
on the occasion of the World AIDS Day
1 December 2005*

LITURGY – CELEBRATION

EUCCHARIST:

Mass for the anointing of the sick (RM, ritual Masses).

CELEBRATION OF THE WORD:

First reading: Strengthen all weary hands: Is 35:3-10.

Responsorial Psalm: Prayer of the afflicted: Ps 123 (122).

Second reading: Our participation in Christ's suffering and glory:
Rm 8:14-28.

Gospel: He took our sicknesses away and carried our diseases for
us: Mt 8:14-18.

QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP REFLECTION

1. Is the fate of so many widows, orphans, young mothers and people whose lives have been destroyed by AIDS close to your heart?
2. How can you make them feel the Lord's love?
3. How can one prevent the spreading of this disease?

PRAYER - MEDITATION

Trials a privilege

James 1:2-5.12-19

My brothers, consider it a great joy when trials of many kinds come upon you, for you well know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance, and perseverance must complete its work so that you will become fully developed, complete, not deficient in any way. (...)

Blessed is anyone who perseveres when trials come. Such a person is of proven worth and will win the prize of life, the crown that the Lord has promised to those who love him.

Never, when you are being put to the test, say, God is tempting me; God cannot be tempted by evil, and he does not put anybody to the test. Everyone is put to the test by being attracted and seduced by that person's own wrong desire. Then the desire conceives and gives birth to sin, and when sin reaches full growth, it gives birth to death.

Make no mistake about this, my dear brothers: all that is good, all that is perfect, is given us from above; it comes down from the Father of all light; with him there is no such thing as alteration, no shadow caused by change. By his own choice he gave birth to us by the message of the truth so that we should be a sort of first-fruits of all his creation.

MISSION INTENTION

That the incarnation of the Son of God, which the Church celebrates solemnly at Christmas, may help the peoples of the Asiatic Continent to recognize God's Envoy, the only Saviour of the world, in Jesus.

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate,

1. "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rm 1:7). With the Apostle Paul's words, I greet you all, members of the Post-Synodal Council of the General Secretariat of the Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops. Since your Council was established and until the end of the Special Assembly, your Council's collaboration has proved invaluable, not only in the drafting of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* but also in the evaluation of its application on the Asian Continent. This task inevitably requires a fruitful dialogue with the "multiethnic, multireligious and multicultural situation of Asia, where Christianity is still too often seen as foreign" (n. 21).

2. The biblical reference in the Synod theme is particularly apt for Asia: "*I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly*" (Jn 10:10). The high percentage of young people registered on the Continent is a reason for optimism for the future and a challenge for the present: a reason for optimism because the new generations, full of promise, are prepared to dedicate themselves totally to a cause; a challenge, because unrealized dreams can give rise to disappointment and those who foster them can easily be taken advantage of by the promoters of extremist ideologies. Moreover, the Church wants to contribute to the cause of peace in Asia, where various conflicts and terrorism are causing the loss of many human lives. During the Special Assembly, the Synod Fathers looked with apprehension at the Holy Land, "the heart of Christianity" beloved to all the children of Abraham. Unfortunately, in recent years, the hotbeds of war have spread so that it is urgently necessary to build peace, a far from easy undertaking that requires the contribution of all people of good will.

3. If the proclamation of the Gospel in Asia is to put down deep roots, all believers in Christ must imbue every aspect of life

with their faith, imitating the Asian saints and martyrs who gave the Catholic faith the supreme witness of blood. It is necessary, especially where Christian faithful suffer and are not free to profess their faith, to proclaim the Kingdom of God with a "silent witness of life" (*Ecclesia in Asia*, n. 23), carrying the cross and following in the footsteps of the suffering and crucified Christ, patiently waiting for the day of full religious freedom to come.

4. In addition, the celebration of the Synod sheds light on the fact that dialogue is a "characteristic mode of the Church's life in Asia" (*ibid.*, n. 3). The spirit of dialogue at the Synod Assembly, which enlivened relations between the youngest Churches and those whose origins date back to the Apostles, is also the right approach to take, with patience and courage, in regard to the other Christian communities. Despite the obstacles, dialogue must progress if the Church is to be faithful to the mandate entrusted to it by Christ to preach the Gospel in its entirety to all nations (cf. Mt 28:19-20), ever docile to the action of the Holy Spirit who is "the prime agent of the inculturation of the Christian faith in Asia. The same Holy Spirit who leads us into the whole truth makes possible a fruitful dialogue with the cultural and religious values of different peoples, among whom he is present in some measure..." (*Ecclesia in Asia*, n. 21).

5. The fact that the Church in Asia is a "little flock" (Lk 12:32) must not lead to discouragement, since the effectiveness of evangelization does not depend on numbers. After Pentecost, the Apostles and a limited number of disciples were sent out to preach the Gospel to the whole world (cf. Ac 2:1 ff.). Through the parables of the yeast (cf. Mt 13:33) and of the mustard seed (cf. Lk 13:19; 17:6), Jesus himself teaches that what is small and hidden to human eyes, thanks to God's almighty intervention, can obtain unhopd for results. Faith in divine Providence, therefore, must constantly inspire the missionary action of the Church in Asia, the Continent of hope.

May Christians in Asia continue to follow Christ faithfully; may they continue, with the greatest possible dedication, to spread the gift of his peace and love.

May the Virgin Mary, Mother of Asia, watch over them all and obtain peace for every Nation on that beloved Continent. I assure you of my prayers and to all of you present here I cordially impart my Blessing, which I gladly extend to all the Bishops, priests, consecrated persons and lay faithful of the Church in Asia.

John Paul II

Address to the participants in the Eighth Meeting of the Post-Synodal Council of the General Secretariat of the Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops

19 November 2004