



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY
OF THE HOLY FATHER BENEDICT XVI
TO CAMEROON AND ANGOLA
(MARCH 17-23, 2009)

**MEETING WITH POLITICAL AND CIVIL AUTHORITIES
AND THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS**

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER BENEDICT XVI*

Presidential Palace in Luanda

Friday, 20 March 2009

*Mr President,
Your Excellencies,
Dear Brother Bishops,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

As a kind gesture of hospitality President José Eduardo dos Santos has welcomed us here to his residence. In so doing he has enabled me to greet you all with great joy and to wish you every success in the formidable responsibilities you bear in serving society and the whole human family in the civic, political and the diplomatic sectors. Mr President, thank you for your welcome, for the kind words of esteem you have just addressed to me as the Successor of Peter, and for your appreciation of the work of the Catholic Church for this beloved nation.

Friends, you are the protagonists and witnesses of an Angola which is on the road to recovery. In the wake of the twenty-seven-year civil war that ravaged this country, peace has begun to take root, bringing with it the fruits of stability and freedom. The Government's tangible efforts to establish an infrastructure and to rebuild the institutions fundamental to development and the well-being of society have begun to foster hope among the nation's citizens. Multilateral agencies too

have made their contribution, determined to overcome particular interests in order to work for the common good. There is also the example of those honest teachers, medical workers, and civil servants who, on meagre wages, serve their communities with integrity and compassion, and there are countless others who selflessly undertake voluntary work at the service of the most needy. May God bless them abundantly! May their charity multiply!

Angola knows that the time has come for Africa to be the Continent of Hope! All upright human conduct is hope in action. Our actions are never indifferent before God. Nor are they indifferent for the unfolding of history. Friends, armed with integrity, magnanimity and compassion, you can transform this continent, freeing your people from the scourges of greed, violence and unrest and leading them along the path marked with the principles indispensable to every modern civic democracy: respect and promotion of human rights, transparent governance, an independent judiciary, a free press, a civil service of integrity, a properly functioning network of schools and hospitals, and – most pressing – a determination born from the conversion of hearts to excise corruption once and for all. In my [Message for the World Day of Peace](#) this year, I drew particular attention to the need for an ethical approach to development. In fact, the peoples of this continent are rightly calling out, not simply for more programmes and protocols, but for a deep-seated, lasting conversion of hearts to sincere solidarity. Their plea to those serving in politics, public service, international agencies, and multinational companies is simply this: stand alongside us in a profoundly human way; accompany us, and our families and our communities (cf. No. 13)!

Social and economic development in Africa bring into partnership national leadership together with regional initiatives and international resolve. Such partnerships require that African nations be seen not simply as the receivers of others' plans and solutions. African men and women themselves, working together for the good of their communities, should be the primary agents of their own development. In this regard, there are a growing number of effective initiatives which merit support. Among them are: the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the Pact on Security, Stability, and Development in the Great Lakes Region, together with the "Kimberley Process", the "Publish What You Pay Coalition" and the "Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative". Their common goal is to promote transparency, honest business practice and good governance. In regard to the international community as a whole, of pressing importance are co-ordinated efforts to address the issue of climate change, the full and fair implementation of the development commitments of the Doha round and likewise the implementation of the oft-repeated promise by developed countries to commit 0.7% of their Gross National Product for official development assistance. This undertaking is all the more necessary in view of the world's current financial turmoil, and must not become one of its casualties.

Friends, I wish to say that my visit to Cameroon and to Angola has stirred within me that profound human delight at being among families. Indeed I think that those who come from other continents can learn afresh from Africa that "the family is the foundation on which the social edifice is built" ([Ecclesia in Africa](#), 80). Yet the strains upon families, as we all know, are many indeed: anxiety

and ignominy caused by poverty, unemployment, disease and displacement, to mention but a few. Particularly disturbing is the crushing yoke of discrimination that women and girls so often endure, not to mention the unspeakable practice of sexual violence and exploitation which causes such humiliation and trauma. I must also mention a further area of grave concern: the policies of those who, claiming to improve the “social edifice”, threaten its very foundations. How bitter the irony of those who promote abortion as a form of “maternal” healthcare! How disconcerting the claim that the termination of life is a matter of reproductive health (cf. *Maputo Protocol*, art. 14)!

The Church, in accordance with the will of her divine founder, you will always find standing alongside the poorest of this continent. I wish to assure each of you that for her part, through diocesan initiatives, through the innumerable educational, healthcare and social works of Religious Orders, and through the development programmes of Caritas and other agencies, the Church will continue to do all she can to support families - including those suffering the harrowing effects of HIV/Aids - and to uphold the equal dignity of women and men, realized in harmonious complementarity. The Christian spiritual journey is one of daily conversion. To this the Church invites all leaders so that the path opened for all humanity will be one of truth, integrity, respect and compassion.

Mr President, I wish to express once again my sincere thanks for welcoming us here to your home. I thank all of you here assembled for your gracious presence and your attention. Be assured of my prayers for you and your families and for all the men, women and children of majestic Africa! God bless you all!

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