



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF RWANDA
ON THEIR "AD LIMINA" VISIT**

Saturday, 21 May 2005

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 laypeople 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.

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