



The Holy See

VISIT TO THE "AD GENTES" HOUSE OF THE VERBITE MISSIONARIES

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

Nemi, Italy

Monday, 9 July 2012

I am truly grateful for the possibility to see this house in Nemi once again after 47 years. I have a very beautiful memory of it, perhaps the most beautiful of the entire Council. I lived in the centre of Rome, at the College of Santa Maria dell'Anima, with all that noise: it was also beautiful! But being here in a green space, having this breath of nature and fresh air as well, was just beautiful in itself. And then there was the company of so many great theologians, with the fine and important task of drafting a [Decree on Mission](#). I remember first of all the Superior General at that time, Fr Schütte, who had suffered in China, and had been condemned, then expelled. He was full of missionary dynamism, of the need to give the missionary spirit a new impetus. And he had me invited, a very young theologian of no importance, I don't know why. But it was a great gift for me.

Then there was Fulton Sheen, who kept us enthralled in the evening with his tails, Fr Congar and the great missiologists of Louvain. For me it was a spiritual enrichment, a great gift. The Decree met with no great opposition. Yet there was a controversy, which I never really understood properly, between the school of Louvain and that of Münster: is the principal purpose of the mission the *implantatio Ecclesiae* or Gospel [*Evangelii*] proclamation? But everything was converging into a single dynamism: the need to bring the light of the Word of God, the light of God's love, to the world and through this proclamation give new joy.

Thus in those days a beautiful and good Decree was drawn up, accepted almost unanimously by the Council Fathers. And I felt it was also a very good complement to [Lumen Gentium](#), because we can find in it a Trinitarian ecclesiology which begins above all with the classic idea of *bonum diffusivum sui*, goodness that has an inherent need to be communicated, to be given. It cannot remain in itself; what is good, goodness itself, is essentially *communicatio*. And this is already

apparent in the Trinitarian mystery, in God, and is disseminated in the history of salvation and in our need to give to others the good that we ourselves have received.

Thus, with such memories I have often thought of those days in Nemi, which as I said, were an essential part of my Council experience. And I am glad to see that your Society is flourishing—Father General has spoken of 6,000 members in many countries and of many nationalities. Missionary dynamism is clearly alive and it is only alive if there is the joy of the Gospel, if we experience the goodness that comes from God that must and wants to be communicated. Thank you for your dynamism. I express my hope that this Chapter will receive every blessing from the Lord, and much inspiration: may the same inspiring power of the Holy Spirit which has almost visibly accompanied us in those days once once more be among you and help you to find the way for your Society, and likewise for the Gospel mission *ad gentes*, in the coming years. Thank you all, may the Lord bless you. Pray for me, as I pray for you. Many thanks!