



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE OF CHAD
ON THEIR "AD LIMINA" VISIT**

*Consistory Hall, Castel Gandolfo
Saturday, 23 September 2006*

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate,

In these days when you are making your *ad limina* visit, I am glad to receive you whom the Lord has chosen to guide the People of God in Chad. Your pilgrimage to Rome leads you to follow in the footsteps of the Apostles Peter and Paul, and enables you to meet the Successor of Peter and his collaborators in order to strengthen your communion with the universal Church.

I hope that these days will be an opportunity for you to strengthen your apostolic zeal, so that your communities receive from it a new impetus in order to be a light that illuminates the path that leads to the One who brings salvation.

I thank your President, Bishop Jean-Claude Bouchard of Pala, for his presentation of the ecclesial situation in your Country. In returning to your Dioceses, please convey to the priests, consecrated men and women, catechists and all the faithful my affectionate greeting and the assurance of my spiritual closeness and encouragement for their Christian life.

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate, you are sent to be missionaries of the Good News in the image of Christ, the Good Shepherd. Continue to carry out this responsibility with confidence and courage!

Holiness of life will make you authentic signs of God's love. Through the proclamation of the Gospel, guide your communities to meeting with the Lord and help them to witness to their hope, contributing to the establishment of a more just society founded on reconciliation and on unity

among all!

The regular participation of the faithful in the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, will give them the strength to follow Christ; they will then feel the need to share with their brothers and sisters the joy of their encounter with the Lord.

By prolonging the First National Eucharistic Congress that your Dioceses celebrated in Moundou early this year, everyone will now have at heart to deepen the knowledge of this great Sacrament in order to make it fruitful in his life.

Moreover, a sound religious formation based on strong spiritual convictions will enable the faithful to lead an existence in conformity with each one's baptismal commitments and to witness to Christian values in society.

I wish to greet your priests with special affection and to encourage them in their difficult but exalting mission of proclaiming the Gospel and serving the People of God.

As I have already had the opportunity to stress, "Being a priest means becoming an ever closer friend of Jesus Christ with the whole of one's existence" (*Chrism Mass*, 13 April 2006; *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, 19 April, p. 3).

As a result of their formation, therefore, priests will be encouraged to be ever more closely involved in the friendship that the Lord never ceases to offer them.

To guarantee this formation in the best possible conditions, I ask you to watch attentively over your seminaries, encouraging the formation teachers in their task of vocational discernment.

Friendship with Christ demands a constant and joyful search of communion of thought, will and action with him, in humble and faithful obedience. This communion can be achieved to the extent that the priest is an authentic man of prayer.

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate, look after the spiritual life of your priests, encouraging them to stay faithful to a rule of priestly life that will help them to conform their existence to the vocation they have received from the Lord. Express to them your fraternal closeness in their ministry; in times of trial and uncertainty, be the one who comforts and, if necessary, corrects, inviting them to keep their eyes fixed on Jesus.

Among the pastoral challenges to be faced is the urgent need to proclaim the whole truth about marriage and the family. Indeed, it is of paramount importance to show that the institution of marriage contributes to the true development of people and of society, and also makes it possible to assure the dignity, equality and true freedom of men and women as well as the human and

spiritual growth of children.

"Having both been created in the image of God, man and woman, although different, are essentially equal from the point of view of their humanity" (*Ecclesia in Africa*, n. 82).

Young people who have received a sound formation will promote a renewal of the family apostolate and will help alleviate the social, cultural or financial difficulties which are obstacles to Christian marriage for many of the faithful.

While preserving the essential values of the African family, may your Country's young people welcome into their lives the beauty and grandeur of Christian marriage, which in its oneness implies indissoluble and faithful love between the spouses.

Charitable action, an expression of love of neighbour rooted in love of God, has an important place in the pastoral work of your Dioceses.

"Love is therefore the service that the Church carries out in order to attend constantly to man's sufferings and his needs, including material needs" (*Deus Caritas Est*, n. 19).

I extend my gratitude to everyone in your Dioceses, especially the women religious, who carry out charitable activity at the service of development, education and health care, as well as receiving refugees. May they not forget the ecclesial specificity of their work in fostering authentic solidarity with people in need, regardless of their origin, and may they strengthen their awareness of being credible witnesses of Christ to their brothers and sisters.

The consolidation of brotherhood between the different communities that make up the Nation is a target that demands the commitment of all, if the Country is to be protected from confrontation that can only bring a fresh outburst of violence.

The recognition of the dignity of each person, of the identity of each human and religious group and of their freedom to practise their religion is part and parcel of the common values of peace and justice that everyone must promote and in which the leaders of civil society have an important role to play.

I am pleased to know that relations between Christians and Muslims in your Country are generally good, mainly thanks above all to the search for a better mutual understanding.

I therefore encourage you to pursue collaboration in a spirit of sincere dialogue and reciprocal respect, in order to help each person lead a life in conformity with the dignity received from God, with concern for a genuine solidarity and for a harmonious development of society.

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate, I entrust your Country to the motherly protection of Our Lady, Queen of Africa. May she intercede with her Son to obtain peace and justice on this Continent, so sorely tried.

I warmly impart my Apostolic Blessing to you all, as well as to the priests, men and women religious, catechists and all the faithful of your Dioceses.

© Copyright 2006 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana