



The Holy See

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

**MEETING WITH REPRESENTATIVES
OF THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY OF CAMEROON**

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER BENEDICT XVI

Apostolic Nunciature of Yaoundé
Thursday, 19 March 2009

My Dear Friends,

Grateful for this opportunity to meet representatives of the Muslim community in Cameroon, I express my heartfelt thanks to Mr Amadou Bello for his kind words of greeting extended to me on your behalf. Our encounter is a vivid sign of the desire we share with all people of good will – in Cameroon, throughout Africa and across the globe – to seek opportunities to exchange ideas about how religion makes an essential contribution to our understanding of culture and the world, and to the peaceful coexistence of all the members of the human family. Initiatives in Cameroon, such as the *Association Camerounaise pour le Dialogue Interreligieux*, illustrate how such dialogue enhances mutual understanding and assists in the building up of a stable and just political order.

Cameroon is home to thousands of Christians and Muslims, who often live, work and worship in the same neighbourhood. Both believe in one, merciful God who on the last day will judge mankind (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 16). Together they bear witness to the fundamental values of family, social responsibility, obedience to God's law and loving concern for the sick and suffering. By patterning their lives on these virtues and teaching them to the young, Christians and Muslims not

only show how they foster the full development of the human person, but also how they forge bonds of solidarity with one's neighbours and advance the common good.

My friends, I believe a particularly urgent task of religion today is to unveil the vast potential of human reason, which is itself God's gift and which is elevated by revelation and faith. Belief in the one God, far from stunting our capacity to understand ourselves and the world, broadens it. Far from setting us against the world, it commits us to it. We are called to help others see the subtle traces and mysterious presence of God in the world which he has marvellously created and continually sustains with his ineffable and all-embracing love. Although his infinite glory can never be directly grasped by our finite minds in this life, we nonetheless catch glimpses of it in the beauty that surrounds us. When men and women allow the magnificent order of the world and the splendour of human dignity to illumine their minds, they discover that what is "reasonable" extends far beyond what mathematics can calculate, logic can deduce and scientific experimentation can demonstrate; it includes the goodness and innate attractiveness of upright and ethical living made known to us in the very language of creation.

This insight prompts us to seek all that is right and just, to step outside the restricted sphere of our own self-interest and act for the good of others. Genuine religion thus widens the horizon of human understanding and stands at the base of any authentically human culture. It rejects all forms of violence and totalitarianism: not only on principles of faith, but also of right reason. Indeed, religion and reason mutually reinforce one another since religion is purified and structured by reason, and reason's full potential is unleashed by revelation and faith.

I therefore encourage you, my dear Muslim friends, to imbue society with the values that emerge from this perspective and elevate human culture, as we work together to build a civilization of love. May the enthusiastic cooperation of Muslims, Catholics and other Christians in Cameroon be a beacon to other African nations of the enormous potential of an interreligious commitment to peace, justice and the common good!

With these sentiments, I once again express my gratitude for this auspicious occasion to meet you during my visit to Cameroon. I thank Almighty God for the blessings he has bestowed upon you and your fellow citizens, and I pray that the links that bind Christians and Muslims in their profound reverence for the one God will continue to grow stronger, so that they will reflect more clearly the wisdom of the Almighty, who enlightens the hearts of all mankind.

