



The Holy See

**LETTER OF JOHN PAUL II
TO ARCHBISHOP NIKOLA ETEROVIC
ON THE OCCASION OF THE MEETING OF THE SPECIAL COUNCIL
FOR AFRICA OF THE GENERAL SECRETARIAT
OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS**

*To Archbishop Nikola Eterovic
General Secretary of the Synod of Bishops*

While the Meeting of the Special Council for Africa of the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops is being held, I offer a very special greeting to you and to all the participants in this Meeting. I wish to express to you once again my gratitude for the important work you have done and continue to do at the service of the Church in Africa.

This Council, elected by the Synod Fathers at the end of the Special Assembly for Africa in 1994, has now been entrusted with the task of preparing for the Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops. Noting the dynamism born from the experience of the First Synod for Africa, this Assembly will endeavour to examine it in greater depth and to extend it, relying on the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* and taking into account the new ecclesial and social data for the Continent. Its task will be to support the local Churches and their Pastors and to help them in their pastoral initiatives, thus preparing for the future of the Church on the Continent of Africa which, as far as peace is concerned, is experiencing political, economic and social unrest.

We give thanks to God for the remarkable expansion that the Catholic Church in Africa has seen in the past 10 years. For this growth to continue, I encourage the Bishops to further the spiritual deepening of all that has been achieved, as well as of the human and Christian development of the clergy and laity. I am delighted with the commitment of many of the faithful to the urgent work of evangelization, and with the social development of the different countries on the Continent. Africans, join forces!

However, Africa is always confronted by terrible scourges, such as armed conflicts, persistent poverty, disease and its devastating consequences, starting with the social drama of AIDS, widespread insecurity and lastly, the corruption that exists in many regions. All this weakens Africa, exhausts her energy, decimates her young generations and mortgages her future. To build a prosperous and stable society, Africa needs all her children to join forces, and I know of the important part played with generosity and self-denial by the sons and daughters of the Church, whose example is an incentive for their African brothers and sisters. May the future Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops also encourage the strengthening of faith in Christ Our Saviour, and genuine reconciliation! The Year of the Eucharist that we are celebrating is a particularly appropriate moment to strengthen or re-establish communion in relations between people and between human or religious groups as well as between the nations in the different African regions.

As I entrust you to the motherly intercession of Our Lady of Africa, to you and to all who are taking part in the meeting of the Special Council for Africa I impart an affectionate Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 23 February 2005

JOHN PAUL II

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