

# **Summary of Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation "Africae munus"<sup>1</sup>**

Here is a summary in English of Pope Benedict's Apostolic Exhortation that was formally signed and released on Saturday [19 November 2011] in Benin.

Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Africae munus  
Presentation by Archbishop Nikola Eterovic  
Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops  
Ouidah, 19 November 2011

## **1) Introduction**

The Holy Father Benedict XVI signed the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Africae munus at Ouidah, Benin, on 19 November 2011. With this gesture, His Holiness is presenting the fruits that emerged from the Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops to the universal Church, and in particular to Africa and its islands. The Synod took place in Rome from 4 to 25 October 2009 on the theme "The Church in Africa, at the Service of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace. 'You are the salt of the earth, ... you are the light of the world'. (Mt 5, 13.14)", and the Supreme Pontiff, president of the Synod, has made a personal contribution to the document, one specific to his Petrine charism. This fact is evinced by the many quotes from his words and writings, not just during the Synod but over the seven years of his Pontificate. Moreover, by today's ceremony His Holiness wishes to express his love and his spiritual closeness to the pilgrim Church on the continent of Africa. This is the second visit made by the Pope to Africa, and both have been associated with the work of the Synod. The first was to Cameroon and Angola in 2009 when he gave the African episcopate the Instrumentum laboris, working document of the Second Special Assembly for Africa.

Africae munus is to be seen as the continuation of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Ecclesia in Africa, published in 1995 after the First Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops. Africae munus notes that Ecclesia in Africa gave great impetus to the growth of the Church in Africa. It also developed the idea of the Church as Family of God, which has been beneficial to the universal Church. Africae munus aims to reinforce this ecclesial dynamism, to outline a programme for pastoral activity and evangelisation, particularly for the new evangelisation of the continent of Africa over coming decades, underlining the need for reconciliation, justice and peace.

The theme of the Synod concerns the Church's evangelising activity, but also the *raison d'être* of the political community at the service of the common good. In order to remain firmly anchored in the Gospel, which inspires the Social Doctrine of the Church, the Word of God has guided the reflections of the Holy Father Benedict XVI and the Synod Fathers. Africae munus recognises the beneficial effect of the 2008 Twelfth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the Word of God in the life and mission of the Church. Thus, apart from the invitation to Christians, which runs throughout the text, to be salt of the earth and light of the world (cf. Mt 5, 13.14), the document is full of references to Holy Scripture. In particular, the title of each of the two parts of the Exhortation is associated with a biblical quote: the first "Behold, I make all things new" (Rev 21, 5) and the second: "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (1 Cor 12, 7).

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<sup>1</sup> Source: <http://www.radiovaticana.net/en3/Articolo.asp?c=539346>

## 2) Structure and purpose of Africae munus

The Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Africae munus is made up of an Introduction, two parts and a Conclusion. Part one has two chapters: (1) "In Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace" and (2) "Paths towards Reconciliation, Justice and Peace". Part two has three chapters: (1) "The Members of the Church"; (2) "Major Areas of the Apostolate" and (3) "Stand up, take your mat and walk!" (Jn 5, 8)".

In the Introduction, the Holy Father Benedict XVI briefly reviews the Second Special Assembly for Africa, before going on to present its abundant fruits in the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation itself. He also identifies the purpose of Africae munus: that of giving all the members of the People of God - bishops, priests, permanent deacons, consecrated persons, catechists and the laity - the precious treasure of "Africa's commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ" (AM 1), giving "a new impulse, filled with evangelical hope and charity" (AM 3) to the Church in Africa that she may truly become salt of the earth and light of the world. The aim of this mission is to lead Africa "to explore its Christian vocation more deeply" by experiencing, "reconciliation between individuals and communities and to promote peace and justice in truth for all" (AM 1). Reawakening faith and hope, the Church is called "to help build a reconciled Africa by pursuing the paths of truth and justice, love and peace (cf. Ps 85, 11)" (AM 2).

Giving great importance to the views expressed by the Synod Fathers, Africae munus is well inserted into the context of modern Africa, characterised as it is by many positive aspects and serious problems. Despite social, political, ethnic, economic and ecological problems, and pandemics such as malaria, AIDS and tuberculosis, "Africa maintains its joie de vivre, celebrating God's gift of life by welcoming children for the increase of the family circle and the human community" (AM 9). Africa also possesses a rich intellectual, cultural and religious heritage. Thus, Africae munus invites Africans to show the courage of Christian faith and hope. Pope Benedict XVI sees in Africa "a 'spiritual lung for a humanity that appears to be in a crisis of faith and hope', on account of the extraordinary human and spiritual riches of its children, its variegated cultures, its soil and sub-soil of abundant resources". Nonetheless, in order to stand erect with dignity, "Africa needs to hear the voice of Christ who today proclaims love of neighbour, love even of one's enemies" (AM 13). The Exhortation seeks to translate theology into pastoral action, providing clear and practical indications for the activity of the Church in the immediate future.

### 3) PART ONE: "See, I am making all things new" (Rev 21, 5)

The Second Special Assembly for Africa was an opportunity to discern the main pillars of the ecclesial mission in a continent which thirsts for reconciliation, justice and peace. Those pillars, which must be translated by pastors into operative guidelines for the particular Churches, are described in part one of Africae munus, which is subdivided into two chapters.

Chapter one, "In Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace", is further divided into the following two sections:

1) "Authentic servants of God's Word". Christians are invited to listen to Jesus Christ, Who calls them through His Word, in order to allow themselves to be reconciled with God and neighbour. This is a vital step in the construction of reconciled communities and nations.

2) "Christ at the heart of African life: the source of reconciliation, justice and peace". The chapter covers: "'Be reconciled with God' (2 Cor 5, 20b)"; "Becoming just and building a just social order" (which is further subdivided into the themes of: "Living in accordance with Christ's justice" and

"Creating a just order in the spirit of the Beatitudes"); "Love in truth: the source of peace" which covers the two topics of: "Concrete fraternal service" and "The Church as a sentinel".

In order to create the necessary preconditions for peace, the strength of reconciliation must be instilled in people's hearts. The Church calls us to the inner purification of man, an essential premise for the construction of justice and peace. Only authentic reconciliation generates lasting peace in society. "It is by granting and receiving forgiveness that the traumatized memories of individuals and communities have found healing and families formerly divided have rediscovered harmony" (AM 21). Obviously, those responsible for crimes must be made to face their responsibilities, also in order that such tragedies never happen again.

It is the responsibility of the political sphere to create a just social order. The Church, however, has the duty to form the consciences of the men and women involved in building a society reconciled in justice and peace. Her function is to educate the world to the religious message announced by Jesus Christ. Indeed, "the model par excellence underlying the Church's thinking and reasoning, which she proposes to all, is Christ" (AM 22). The Church is involved in the civic education of citizens, also by means of her Justice and Peace Commissions. Living in accordance with Christ's justice means undertaking to ensure that people are rendered justice - "rendering to each his due" - in the face of serious forms of injustice such as, for example, "the plundering of the goods of the earth by a minority to the detriment of entire peoples" (AM 24), which is unacceptable and immoral. Justice must be upheld by subsidiarity and solidarity, and animated by charity. "Charity, which ensures a bond with God, goes beyond distributive justice" (AM 24). Human justice is always limited and imperfect, but divine justice shows it a horizon towards it must strive in order to be fully realised. Jesus Christ proposes a revolution, not social or political, but a revolution of love upon which the Beatitudes have their foundation. They present a new horizon of justice, which was inaugurated in the Paschal mystery and which is capable of making people just, in order to construct a better world. "In the spirit of the Beatitudes, preferential attention is to be given to the poor, the hungry, the sick, ... to the stranger, the disadvantaged, the prisoner, the immigrant who is looked down upon, the refugee or displaced person" (AM 27).

Divine justice, founded on love, transcends the minimum which human justice requires and reaches unto the giving of self for others. Societies will always have need of the love which "soothes hearts that are hurt, forlorn or abandoned. It is love which brings or restores peace to human hearts and establishes it in our midst" (AM 29). The Church is called to make Christ's voice heard in modern Africa, inviting everyone to "be born from above" (Jn 3, 7). Faithful to the Lord's command, the Church "feels the duty to be present wherever human suffering exists and to make heard the silent cry of the innocent who suffer persecution, or of peoples whose governments mortgage the present and the future for personal interests" (AM 30). Little by little, the Church is helping to forge the new Africa.

Chapter two, "Paths towards Reconciliation, Justice and Peace", identifies certain fields of action which, in the view of the Synod Fathers, should help Africa to free itself from the forces which paralyze it. The chapter is divided into four sections:

1) "Care for the human person" covers five points: "Metanoia: an authentic conversion"; "Experiencing the truth of the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation"; "A spirituality of communion"; "The inculturation of the Gospel and the evangelisation of culture", and "The gift of Christ: the Eucharist and the Word of God".

Africae munus underscores the importance of the vital bond between memorised catechesis and lived catechesis, which leads to profound and lasting conversion, and therefore to an effective

commitment to live the Gospel at an individual, family and social level. The Sacrament of Penance, the encounter with Jesus Christ Who alone is the great Mediator, is sufficient to reconcile us with God and with neighbour. This has both individual and community dimensions. The traditional rites of reconciliation which have positive aspects, but also limitations, help the faithful to approach Christ with greater depth and truth, Christ in Whom God reconciles us with Himself and with each other. The Church, and in first place the bishops, must discern the values of individual cultures in order to identify the aspects which promote or hinder the incarnation of the values of the Gospel. The true protagonist of inculturation is the Holy Spirit which "enables the Gospel to permeate all cultures, without becoming subservient to any" (AM 37). Jesus Christ Who nourishes the faithful with the Eucharist and the Word of God, creates, in the grace of the Spirit, a new fraternity opposed to division, tribalism, racism and ethnocentrism.

2) "Living in harmony", covers the following topics: "The family"; "The elderly"; "Men", "Women"; "Young people", and "Children".

Africae munus dedicates considerable space to the family, the sanctuary of life and the living cell of society and the Church. The family is also the place of education, the place where the culture of forgiveness, peace and reconciliation is practised, and it must be protected and defended against the many threats it faces. The Christian family is called to be a "domestic church", a place where "all the members evangelize and are evangelized" (AM 46). It must set aside due space for prayer, celebrate Sundays and holy days, and read Holy Scripture every day. The elderly enjoy particular veneration in Africa. They are esteemed for their wisdom and experience, and play a positive role for all members of the family, especially for children and young couples. Society has need of them because stability and social order in Africa are often entrusted to a council of elders or traditional leaders. The Church also has need of them, particularly to announce the Gospel. Africa can inspire Western societies in this field.

Having emphasised the important role played by men, who "manifest and live on earth God's own fatherhood" (AM 53), the Exhortation shows particular sensitivity towards African women who have a vital role to play in society and the Church. It urges Christians "to combat all acts of violence against women, speaking out and condemning them" (AM 56). Young people, who represent the majority of the population of Africa, deserve particular consideration, while children attract the special attention of the Church because they are a gift of God, source of hope and renewal. They must be given special protection by families and society, especially against various intolerable and deplorable forms of treatment which the document lists in paragraph 67.

3) "The African vision of life" includes the subheadings: "The protection of life" and "Respect for creation and the ecosystem"; "The good governance of States"; "Migrants, displaced persons and refugees", and "Globalisation and international aid".

The African worldview includes the visible and the invisible world, "ancestors, the living and those yet to be born, the whole of creation and all beings" (AM 69). It opens hearts and spirits to acceptance of the message of Christ and comprehension of the mystery of the Church. Committed to promoting life and the integral development "of each man and of all of man", the Church opposes abortion and, among other things, "acknowledges the courage of governments that have legislated against the culture of death" (AM 70). The Church likewise deplores the disaster wreaked by drugs and the abuses of alcoholism. Through her healthcare institutions, she is in the front line of the battle against the pandemics of malaria, tuberculosis and AIDS, which require a medical and pharmaceutical, but above all an ethical, response (cf. AM 72-73). Illiteracy can also be considered as a pandemic, and the Church makes her contribution to eradicating that scourge – a kind of social death – through her network of Catholic schools of all levels.

Africa needs good governance of States. This comes about through respect for Constitutions, free elections, independent judicial and penitential systems, and a transparent bureaucracy free from the temptation of corruption. The Exhortation, while underlining "the need to make every effort to eliminate the death penalty" (AM 83), exhorts the Church to organise pastoral care in gaols and to promote restorative justice. Good governance is also expressed through respect for creation, employing the wealth of raw materials for the common good not for the profit of the few, and through respect for the ecosystem, protecting such essential resources as land and water. The migration of millions of people within Africa and beyond its borders is becoming a multidimensional problem which calls for responses, not only from the Church but from the entire international community. The Church hopes for the globalisation of solidarity, something which includes "the principle of gratuitousness and the logic of gift as an expression of fraternity" (AM 86)

4) "Dialogue and communion among believers" includes "Ecumenical dialogue and the challenge of new religious movements"; "Inter-religious dialogue": which in turn is subdivided into "Traditional African religions" and "Islam"; "Becoming 'the salt of the earth' and 'the light of the world'".

Since inter-religious relations affect peace, the Church promotes dialogue as a spiritual approach to support initiatives of peace and justice. In Africa too, reconciliation involves communion among the disciples of Jesus Christ. In addition to the need for ecumenical dialogue there is an urgent necessity for a profound evangelisation of the African soul, in order to give the faithful the power of discernment in the face of the expansion of the so-called autochthonous African Churches, syncretic movements and sects. Most African Christians come from the traditional religions, with which they maintain daily contact. We must undertake serious discernment, accepting the elements of traditional cultures that conform to the teaching of Jesus Christ and identifying points of divergence, such as magic and witchcraft, which have highly negative effects on families and society. In considering relations with Islam, *Africae munus* reiterates the importance of dialogue in respect for religious freedom, including freedom of conscience. Christians draw nourishment from the authentic font of Jesus Christ, also in inter-religious dialogue, and allow themselves to be transformed by Him to become "salt of the earth" and "light of the world".

4) PART TWO: "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (1 Cor 12, 7)

In an Africa marked by contrasts, the Church shows the way towards Christ Who, by giving His Spirit, ensures her unity in the diversity of gifts received for the common good. Therefore, all members of the People of God must contribute to communion and peace in the Church and in society. This is the subject matter of part two of *Africae munus*, which is divided into three chapters.

Chapter one, "The members of the Church", underlines the fact that peace and justice arise above all through man's reconciliation with God and with himself. This is a gift of God which invites everyone to convert, to become just. In particular, the following categories of people are listed: "Bishops"; "Priests"; "Missionaries"; "Permanent deacons"; "Consecrated persons"; "Seminarians"; "Catechists" and "Lay people".

The bishop, enamoured of God, is characterised by the sanctity of his life whence derive his moral stature and the authority with which he guides a particular Church. His unity with Peter's Successor and his communion with his priests are antidotes to the seeds of division, to the temptation of nationalism, and to the absolutisation of African culture. As good pastors, bishops have the duty to bring the Good News to the faithful through appropriate catechesis, dedicating themselves to the

education of the laity, also in the fields of politics and the economy. Dioceses must "become models in the conduct of personnel, in transparency and good financial management" (AM 104). In order to consolidate ecclesial communion and to promote pastoral solidarity, bishops are called to collaborate with national, regional and continental episcopal conferences; that is, with the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SCEAM). Priests are the indispensable collaborators of bishops in carrying forward the work of evangelisation. They are called to live holy and peaceful lives, to overcome tribal and racial barriers and to touch the hearts of everyone. Obedient to their diocesan bishop, they should offer the witness of an exemplary life lived in celibacy and detachment from material things. They should remain faithful to their mission as pastors following God's heart, without falling into the temptation of becoming political leaders or social workers.

Africae munus expresses great praise for the apostolic zeal of many holy and generous missionaries who brought the light of Christ into Africa and favoured the birth of numerous African saints as models from whom to draw inspiration. "It would be profitable to renew and promote devotion to these saints" (AM 113). The document also encourages the pastors of particular Churches "to recognize among servants of the Gospel in Africa those who could be canonized according to the norms of the Church, not only in order to increase the number of African saints, but also to obtain new intercessors in heaven" (AM 114).

The Exhortation underscores the importance of the ecclesial service of permanent deacons as fathers to their own families and to the faithful among whom they undertake their pastoral service. Consecrated persons merit particular attention for the witness they give of lives entirely entrusted to God and dedicated to the service of others, especially in the vast field of pastoral work in educational and healthcare institutions. Seminarians are called to ready themselves for the priesthood, both theologically and spiritually, in an atmosphere that favours their psychological and human development. They are also called to be apostles among the young. The Exhortation lays great emphasis on the contribution catechists make to the work of evangelisation and highlights the importance of their permanent formation in order that they might contribute better to the spread of the Gospel of Jesus among those who do not yet know it. Like permanent deacons, catechists and their families are invited to be exemplary models of Christian life. Lay people, witnesses of Christ, cause the Church to be present in the world. "Lay men and women are called, above all, to holiness, a holiness which is to be lived in the world" (AM 129). They demonstrate that work, before being a means to make a profit, is an opportunity for self-realisation and of service to others. People called to activity in the political, economic, cultural and social fields should have a good knowledge of the Social Doctrine of the Church.

Chapter two, "Major areas of the apostolate", is divided into four headings: "The Church as the presence of Christ"; "The world of education"; "The world of health care", and "The world of information technology and communications".

The Church, a mystery and a visible society, is divided into various sections: dioceses, parishes, grassroots communities, movements and associations, Christian families. All "can be helpful places for accepting and living the gift of reconciliation offered by Christ our peace" (AM 133). Africae munus dwells on the individual fields of pastoral activity in the Church, underlining the vital importance of Catholic schools as "a precious resource for learning from childhood how to create bonds of peace and harmony in society, since they train children in the African values that are taken up by those of the Gospel" (AM 134). Catholic universities and Catholic academic institutions have an important role in the search for that Truth which surpasses human measure, brings peace among people and reconciles society, helping African society not just to a better understanding of current challenges, but also to face them in the light of the Gospel. While maintaining their Catholic

identity, and in conformity with the Social Doctrine of the Church, they contribute to the development of African theology and foster inculturation, giving the Church a chance to be present and to act in the field of cultural change.

Following the example of Jesus Christ, with her healthcare institutions the Church continues to heal the sick, in each of whom she sees a suffering limb of the Body of Christ. She combats disease, illness and the great pandemics, remaining faithful to her ethical pro-life teachings. The transparent management of funds must primarily serve the good of the sick. To the extent possible, it is important to increase "the number of smaller dispensaries which provide local care and emergency aid" (AM 141). We must thank all individuals and institutions, especially those of consecrated life, for their commitment in the fields of education and healthcare, encouraging them to intensify their efforts despite the many difficulties and challenges.

The communications media are important tools for evangelisation and "for educating the African peoples to reconciliation in truth, and the promotion of justice and peace" (AM 145). The Church must seek a greater media presence, in the knowledge that "the new information technologies are capable of being powerful instruments for unity and peace, but also for destruction and division" (AM 143). It is to be hoped that better use will be made of Catholic mass media, also through greater coordination with existing structures, for a more widespread promotion of peace, justice and reconciliation in Africa.

Chapter three, "Stand up, take your mat and walk!" (Jn 5, 8)", is divided into three parts: "Jesus' teaching at the pool of Bethzatha"; "The Word of God and the Sacraments", which deals with: "The Sacred Scriptures", "The Eucharist", "Reconciliation"; "The New Evangelisation" which reflects upon: "Bearers of Christ' the light of the world", "Witnesses of the risen Christ", "Missionaries in the footsteps of Christ". The Exhortation concludes with an appeal full of hope: "'Take heart; rise, He is calling' (Mk 10, 49)".

The Holy Father Benedict XVI returns to a number of his earlier points, outlining some practical guidelines to put them into practice. Referring to the healing of the sick man at the pool of Bethzatha, Africae munus explains that "by accepting Jesus, Africa can receive incomparably effective and deep healing" (AM 149). Firstly, the Church offers torn and wounded hearts the announcement of the Word of God which heals, liberates and reconciles. Thus the Exhortation advises each member of the faithful, and each family and community, to read the Bible every day, to become familiar with the lectio divina, and to promote the biblical apostolate enabling the divine Word to regenerate fraternal communion. The Eucharistic is the most effective way to forge a life of intimate communion with God and neighbour. Through the Eucharistic Christ the faithful become blood relations and therefore true brothers and sisters. "This bond of fraternity is stronger than that of human families, than that of our tribes" (AM 152). The celebration of the Eucharist must be extended into personal, family and social life. This is "Eucharistic coherence" which calls on all Christian consciences. Africae munus exhorts the Church in Africa to pay particular attention to the celebration of the Eucharist and to take up the Synod Fathers' proposal to celebrate a continental Eucharistic Congress.

The Sacrament of Penance heals wounds and cures afflicted hearts. It renews the broken ties between man and God and restores the bonds of society. For this reason the faithful are encouraged "to restore to its true place the Sacrament of Reconciliation in its twofold dimension, personal and communitarian" (AM 156). In order to encourage the celebration of this Sacrament Benedict XVI echoes the hope expressed by the Synod Fathers "that each country celebrate yearly 'a day or week of reconciliation, particularly during Advent or Lent'. SECAM will be able to help bring this about and, in accord with the Holy See, promote a continent-wide Year of Reconciliation

to beg of God special forgiveness for all the evils and injuries mutually inflicted in Africa, and for the reconciliation of persons and groups who have been hurt in the Church and in the whole of society" (AM 157).

The Church in Africa must show increasing commitment to evangelisation (which concerns the ordinary aspects of pastoral care), to the *missio ad gentes* (bringing the Good News of Jesus Christ to those who do not know Him), and to the new evangelisation of people who fail to follow Christian practice. New evangelisation in Africa "is especially concerned with the Church's service to reconciliation, justice and peace" (AM 169). God will bless reconciled hearts with the gift of peace, and the reconciled faithful will become builders of peace and promoters of justice.

Only evangelisation driven by the Holy Spirit brings spiritual fruits and becomes the new law of the Gospel. "The heart of all evangelizing activity is the proclamation of the person of Jesus, the incarnate Word of God (cf. Jn 1:14) who died and rose again and is ever present in the community of the faithful, his Church (cf. Mt 28:20)" (AM 160). Evangelisation must discover a new ardour, the ardour of the many saints and martyrs, confessors and virgins of the African continent, and new evangelisation must use the modern methods that are available today.

In a number of African countries, the Church has commemorated the centenary of evangelisation, undertaking to spread the Gospel among those who do not yet know Jesus Christ. Guided by the grace of the Holy Spirit, Christians are called to follow "the path of holiness, and thus increasingly become apostles of reconciliation, justice and peace" (AM 171). Thus, the *missio ad gentes* advances step by step with the new evangelisation, which "needs to integrate the intellectual dimension of the faith into the living experience of the encounter with Jesus Christ present and at work in the ecclesial community" (AM 165). By sending out her priests and consecrated persons, the Church in Africa is also called to contribute to the new evangelisation in secularised countries of ancient Christian tradition which, in the past, produced many missionaries.

In its Conclusion the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation invites Christians and the entire continent to take hope: "'Take heart; rise, He is calling' (Mk 10, 49)". These words of the Lord Jesus are echoed in the Holy Father's Exhortation: "Get up, Church in Africa" (AM 173). This hope is rooted in the love of the One Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, source of reconciliation, justice and peace. Giving assurances of the concern and interest of the entire Catholic Church, the Supreme Pontiff entrusts the task of evangelising the continent of Africa to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Africa, to St. Joseph and to all saints venerated in Africa. Praying that "the miracle of Pentecost may spread throughout the continent of Africa, and everyone may become ever more an apostle of reconciliation, justice and peace" (AM 176), he says: "May the Catholic Church in Africa always be one of the spiritual lungs of humanity, and become daily an ever greater blessing for the noble African continent and for the entire world" (AM 177).

##### 5) Principal ideas contained in *Africae munus*

It may be helpful, in concluding this brief outline of the contents of *Africae munus*, to identify some of the principal ideas it contains. It is made up of two parts. Part one (nos. 14-96) discerns the fundamental structures of the ecclesial mission on the continent, a mission which aspires to reconciliation, justice and peace, and has its origin in the person of Jesus Christ. Listening to Him, Christians are invited to let themselves be reconciled with God (cf. 2 Cor 5, 20b), becoming just in order to build a just social order in keeping with the logic of the Beatitudes, and committing themselves to fraternal service for love of truth, which is a source of peace. Attention then turns to the paths towards reconciliation, justice and peace. These include authentic conversion, the celebration of the Sacrament of Penance, the spirituality of communion, the inculturation of the



Gospel, the protection of life, migrants, displaced persons, refugees, the good governance of States, and ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue especially with traditional religions and Islam. In part two (nos. 97-177) all members of the Church are invited to contribute to communion and peace in the Church and in society. It also identifies areas for the apostolate: the Church as the presence of Christ, the world of education, health care and the communications media. The Exhortation opens a horizon of hope to Africa which, by welcoming Jesus Christ, must free itself from the forces which paralyze it.

*Africae munus* is the continuation of *Ecclesia in Africa*, which was published after the First Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops and gave great impetus to the growth of the Church in Africa developing, among other things, the idea of the Church as Family of God which has been beneficial to the universal Church. *Africae munus* aims to reinforce this ecclesial dynamism, to outline a programme for pastoral activity for the coming decades of evangelisation in Africa, underlining the need for reconciliation, justice and peace.

The Church, Sacrament of union with God and man, must be a place of reconciliation, a gift of God, in order to be an effective tool of justice and peace for the whole of society. Reconciliation comes from the mystery of the risen Christ Who is present in His church through the Word of God and the Sacraments, especially those of Penance and the Eucharist. Through the grace of the Spirit, the Eucharist creates a new brotherhood which overcomes languages, cultures, ethnicities, divisions, tribalism, racism and ethnocentrism. In her work of evangelisation and education in the Christian faith, the Church must concentrate on lived catechesis, which leads to profound conversion and to real commitment to live the Gospel at a personal, family and social level. The Social Doctrine of the Church is of great help in sustaining human development.

*Africae munus* offers the Church in Africa practical guidance for pastoral activity over coming decades.

- Evangelisation ad gentes, the announcement of the Gospel to those who still do not know Jesus Christ, is still of vital importance in Africa. It is a pastoral priority which involves all African Christians.
- Ordinary evangelisation must be increasingly promoted in the various particular Churches, through commitment to fostering reconciliation, justice and peace.
- There is also an urgent need to work for the new evangelisation in Africa, especially among people who have distanced themselves from the Church or who do not behave in a Christian fashion. African Christians, and in particular the clergy and consecrated persons, are likewise called to support new evangelisation in secularised nations. This is an exchange of gifts, because African missionaries are already at work in countries which once produced missionaries who went forth to announce the Good News in Africa.

Among the practical suggestions contained in *Africae munus*, we may note the following:

- Saints, people reconciled with God and neighbour, are exemplary heralds of justice and apostles of peace. The Church – all of whose members are called to sanctity – must discover fresh ardour, the ardour of the many saints and martyrs, confessors and virgins of the African continent, devotion to whom should be renewed and promoted (cf. AM 113).

- In order to find further examples of sanctity, also obtaining new intercessors in heaven, pastors of the particular Churches are encouraged "to recognize among servants of the Gospel in Africa those who could be canonized according to the norms of the Church" (AM 114).
- The bonds of communion between the Holy Father and the bishops of Africa must be strengthened, as must the bonds among Africa bishops themselves, at the national, regional and continental level.
- It is considered important "for the bishops to help support, effectively and affectively, the Symposium of Bishops' Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) as a continental structure of solidarity and ecclesial communion" (AM 107).
- For a deeper appreciation of the mystery of the Eucharist and to increase Eucharistic devotion, emphasis is given to the Synod Fathers' proposal to celebrate a continental Eucharistic Congress (cf. AM 153).
- African countries are encouraged to "celebrate yearly 'a day or week of reconciliation, particularly during Advent or Lent'" (AM 157).
- In agreement with the Holy See, SECAM may contribute to promoting "a continent-wide Year of Reconciliation to beg of God special forgiveness for all the evils and injuries mutually inflicted in Africa, and for the reconciliation of persons and groups who have been hurt in the Church and in the whole of society" (AM 157).

Grateful for the gift of faith in the One Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, with renewed enthusiasm the Church in Africa reaffirms her commitment to evangelisation and human development, so that the entire continent may become a vast field of reconciliation, justice and peace. In this way, the Church contributes to forging the new Africa, which is increasingly called to become the "spiritual lung" of humankind.