



The Holy See

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

FAREWELL CEREMONY

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER BENEDICT XVI

4 de Fevereiro International Airport of Luanda
Monday, 23 March 2009

Mr President,
Distinguished Civil, Military and Ecclesiastical Authorities,
Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,
Dear Angolan Friends,

Keenly aware of your presence as I depart, Mr President, I would like to express to you my appreciation and my thanks for the courteous treatment you have given me and for the efforts made to ensure the smooth progress of all the meetings I have had the joy of experiencing. To the civil and military authorities and to the Pastors and leaders of the ecclesial communities and institutions involved in those meetings, I express my warmest thanks for all the courtesy with which they honoured me during these days that I was able to spend among you. A word of gratitude is owed to the media personnel, to the security forces and to all the volunteers who generously, efficiently and discreetly contributed to the successful outcome of my visit.

I thank God that I have found the Church here to be so alive and full of enthusiasm, despite the difficulties, able to take up its own cross and that of others, bearing witness before everyone to the saving power of the Gospel message. She continues to proclaim that the time of hope has come, and she is committed to bringing peace and promoting the exercise of fraternal charity in a way

that is acceptable to all, respecting the ideas and sensitivities of each person. It is time to say goodbye and to set off once more for Rome, sad at having to leave you, but glad to have known a courageous people determined to begin again. Despite the problems and obstacles, the people of Angola intend to build their future by travelling along paths of forgiveness, justice and solidarity.

If I may be permitted to make one last appeal, I would ask that the just realization of the fundamental aspirations of the most needy peoples should be the principal concern of those in public office, since their intention – I am sure – is to carry out the mission they have received not for themselves but for the sake of the common good. Our hearts cannot find peace while there are still brothers and sisters who suffer for lack of food, work, shelter or other fundamental goods. If we are to offer a definite response to these fellow human beings, the first challenge to be overcome is that of building solidarity: solidarity between generations, solidarity between nations and between continents, which should lead to an ever more equitable sharing of the earth's resources among all people.

From Luanda I broaden my gaze to include the whole of Africa, confirming our appointment for the coming month of October in Vatican City, when we shall gather for the Second Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops dedicated to this continent, where the incarnate Word in person found refuge. I ask God to grant his protection and assistance to the countless refugees who have fled their country, and are now at large, waiting to be able to return home. The God of Heaven says to them once again: "Even if a woman should forget the child at her breast, yet I will not forget you" (*Is 49:15*). God loves you like sons and daughters; he watches over your days and your nights, your labours and your aspirations.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, friends from Africa, dear Angolans, take heart! Never tire of promoting peace, making gestures of forgiveness and working for national reconciliation, so that violence may never prevail over dialogue, nor fear and discouragement over trust, nor rancour over fraternal love. This is all possible if you recognize one another as children of the same Father, the one Father in Heaven. May God bless Angola! May he bless each of her sons and daughters! May he bless the present and the future of this beloved nation. May God be with you!

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