



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II
FOR THE DEDICATION OF THE MARIAN SHRINE
"NOTRE-DAME D'ARIGBO" IN BENIN**

The Holy Father cordially joins in the joy and thanksgiving of the pilgrims who since 1954 have come in great numbers to this shrine to express their loving devotion to the Mother of God and to entrust themselves to her motherly protection. He encourages them to pray fervently to the Lord that they may become genuine architects of peace based on justice and forgiveness and courageous missionaries of the Gospel. May this shrine dedicated to the Mother of God, Our Lady of Peace, be a reminder to all Christians to revive the gift they received in Baptism, so as to become every day living stones of the Church, the Family of God.

The Pope invites all those present to open their hearts stronger to the transforming action of the Holy Spirit, who banishes fears and makes possible constructive dialogue among peoples and individuals. In union with their Pastors, may all receive the life-giving grace of God, certain that the Lord can create openings for peace where there seem to be only obstacles and resistance, and that he can strengthen and expand solidarity among the members of the human family, in spite of endless episodes of division and conflict (cf. *Message for World Day of Peace 2002*, n. 14)!

With a cordial greeting for the civil, military and religious authorities present, the Holy Father entrusts to the motherly intercession of the Virgin Mary those who have gathered on this happy occasion. He gladly imparts his Apostolic Blessing, which he extends first of all to the beloved Cardinal Gantin, who is to preside at the celebration of the consecration of the shrine, to Bishop Antoine Ganyé of Dassa-Zoumé and to all the Bishops present, to the priests, deacons, men and women religious, catechists and all the faithful who have come from Benin, from other African countries and from Europe to celebrate joyfully this ecclesial event.

Cardinal Angelo Sodano,
Secretary of State

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