



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PAPAL REPRESENTATIVES
SERVING IN AFRICA AND MADAGASCAR***

Saturday, 25 September 2004

Dear Papal Representatives,

1. I am happy to welcome you at the end of your meeting in Rome. I would like to renew to each of you my appreciation of the invaluable service you offer the Ecclesial and Civil Communities in Africa.

We all cherish in our minds and hearts *the memory of Archbishop Michael Aidan Courtney*, who carried out his mission to the suffering people of Burundi with generosity and fidelity to the point of making the supreme sacrifice of his life. May his *heroic witness instil renewed strength in all who work for peace* in Burundi and throughout the African Continent!

2. I know that you carry out your service with zeal and fidelity in difficult situations, sharing the sufferings and tragedies of the Churches and Peoples to whom you have been sent. I willingly take this opportunity to express to you once again my gratitude for the dedication and wisdom with which you carry out the sensitive mission entrusted to you! *Know that the Pope and the Roman Curia are with you, as our meeting shows.*

The Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for Africa, whose 10th anniversary occurs this year, and the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* were events that showed the Church's particularly intense pastoral concern for that Continent.

Today the Church in Africa is facing old and new problems, but she is also open to great hopes. As Papal Representatives, you are called to guide the development of Ecclesial Communities, to encourage the integral progress of society and above all, *to encourage the "encounter of cultures*

with Christ and his Gospel" (Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, n. 61).

3. Continue to do your utmost to be *witnesses of communion* in order to surmount the tensions and misunderstandings, the victory over the temptation of particularism and the reinforcement of the sense of belonging to the one and undivided People of God.

With these sentiments and hopes, I renew to you my most cordial thanks for this meeting, and entrust you and your missions to the motherly protection of the Virgin Mary, Star of Evangelization.

To you who are present here and to your collaborators in the Nunciatures, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing and gladly extend it to the beloved Peoples of Africa, among whom you carry out your specialized work as Papal Representatives.

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