



SYNOD OF BISHOPS

II SPECIAL ASSEMBLY FOR AFRICA

**THE CHURCH IN AFRICA
IN SERVICE TO
RECONCILIATION, JUSTICE AND PEACE.**

*"You are the salt of the earth...
You are the light of the world" (Mt 5: 13, 14)*

INSTRUMENTUM LABORIS

Vatican City

2009

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PREFACE

In keeping with the desires of the episcopate of Africa, the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, officially convoked the Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops, which

is to take place in the Vatican from 4 to 25 October 2009. After due consultation, the Bishop of Rome, the Head of the Episcopal College and President of the Synod of Bishops, chose as the topic for this synodal gathering: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace: “You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world” ([Mt 5: 13, 14](#)).

The Special Council for Africa of the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops in its turn oversaw the preparation of the [Lineamenta](#), a presentation on the synod topic, which was made public 27 June 2006. Subsequently, the same Council drafted this *Instrumentum laboris*, the working document of the Second Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, which is a summary of the responses to the questions in the [Lineamenta](#), submitted by the 36 episcopal conferences and 2 Eastern Catholic Churches sui iuris on the African continent, as well as those of the 25 Departments of the Roman Curia and the Union of Superiors General. Its content also includes observations from various ecclesial institutions and Christ’s faithful, responsible for evangelization and human promotion in Africa.

The topic of the synodal assembly is very significant. First of all, it has as a reference point the First Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops which took place 15 years ago, from 10 April to 8 May 1994. The results of this synodal assembly were gathered by the Servant of God, [Pope John Paul II](#) and presented in the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation [Ecclesia in Africa](#), published on 14 September 1995. Keeping in mind this document which continues to have relevance today, the synod fathers, guided by the Supreme Pontiff, will thoroughly examine its topics of reconciliation, justice and peace, so that together the Church, in her communities and institutions, and Christians, individually or in groups, might increasingly become on African soil the salt of the earth and the light of the world in its social, cultural and religious spheres.

“Be reconciled to God” ([2 Cor 5:20](#)). This pressing invitation to the Christians of Corinth and the whole world is addressed in a special way to Christ’s faithful and all people of good will in Africa, torn by many conflicts and ethnic, social and religious divisions, which oftentimes erupt into hateful and violent happenings. The situation shows that personal sins have negative ramifications in society. At the same time, they display the urgent character of the work of reconciliation to God and neighbour. God the Father, in his infinite goodness and never-ending mercy, initiates the process of reconciliation through the workings of the Holy Spirit. He has reconciled us to himself through his Only-Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, who has entrusted to his Church the ministry of reconciliation (cf. [2 Cor 5:19](#)). To accomplish this task, the Risen Lord gave his Holy Spirit to his disciples for the forgiveness of sins (cf. [Jn 20:22](#)). Central to the reconciliation between God and humanity is the pierced heart of the crucified Lord, from which blood and water continue to flow (cf. [Jn 19:34](#)) in the sacraments of our salvation. Through the cross, Jesus Christ has reconciled two peoples, Jews and Gentiles, destroying every hostility between them and making them one body (cf. [Eph 2:14-16](#)).

Reconciliation to God gives believers, including those in Africa, access to the power of the Holy Spirit so they can be reconciled to others. The work of reconciliation goes beyond relations among persons and peoples and extends itself to all creation (cf. [Rom 8:19](#)). In fact, through Jesus Christ, God the Father has reconciled all things to himself, the things of heaven and the things of earth (cf. [Col 1:20](#)). If the Church is to fulfill well the ministry of reconciliation entrusted to her by the Lord Jesus, she herself must become more and more a reconciled community, a place where reconciliation is proclaimed to all people of good will.

“For thus it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness” ([Mt 3:15](#)). Jesus Christ, in insisting that he be baptized by St. John the Baptist, wished to do what was just before the Father, thus fulfilling his will. Because of this, he received heaven’s approval. The Holy Spirit

descended upon Jesus in the form of a dove and the Father acknowledged his beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased (cf. [Mt 3:16-17](#)). Obedience to God's will flows from justice towards one's neighbour, a fact also indicated, among other things, in the Decalogue (cf. [Ex 20:2-17](#)). The rights of God come before and serve as the basis for the rights of individuals and peoples. Jesus Christ himself promised that God will readily give justice to his elect who cry out to him day and night (cf. [Lk 18:6-8](#)).

Seen among the vast numbers of the elect are the infirm, the poor, the enslaved, widows, foreigners, migrants and persons on the periphery of African society. These are the very recipients of God's preferential love, so much so that the Lord Jesus identifies himself with them: "as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" ([Mt 25:40](#)). In particular, Jesus Christ declares blessed those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake (cf. [Mt 5:10](#)). He himself is the example par excellence of God's righteous and gentle servant who justifies many (cf. [Mt 12:18-21](#); [Is 40:1-4](#); [53:11](#)). Through the grace of the Holy Spirit, the justice of Christians goes beyond that of the Pharisees (cf. [Mt 5:20](#)) and becomes mercy (cf. [Mt 9:13](#); [12:7](#)). Even penitent sinners, who believe in God and do his will, as did the publicans and prostitutes, have a place in the Kingdom of justice and peace (cf. [Mt 21:32](#)). Retributive justice must be integrated with reparative justice, in Africa and everywhere in the world.

"Peace be with you!" ([Jn 20:19](#)). The Lord Jesus abundantly poured out his Spirit on his disciples and offered them peace (cf. [Jn 20:21](#); [3:34](#)). This kind of peace the world cannot give (cf. [Jn 14:27](#)), because the world does not know the Lord Jesus nor his Holy Spirit (cf. [Jn 14:17](#)). In fact, Jesus Christ is our peace; he is the one who has broken down the wall of hostility between peoples (cf. [Eph 2:14](#)). From the time of his birth, Jesus set on the path of peace the feet of a people shrouded in darkness (cf. [Lk 1:79](#)). All creation rejoices; the heavens and the earth and all people of good will. The multitude of the heavenly choirs sang glory to God in the highest heavens, wishing peace on earth to those whom God loves (cf. [Lk 2:14](#)).

Unfortunately not everyone accepts Jesus and the gift of his peace. In his battle with the darkness of sin and death, the Lord Jesus became a sign of contradiction (cf. [Lk 2:34](#)). He cried over the fate of Jerusalem, because she did not know the way of peace (cf. [Lk 19:42](#)). Despite the trials, Christ's faithful have received the promise of the Lord's peace, because he overcame the world (cf. [Jn 16:33](#)). We exchange the Lord's peace during the Eucharistic Liturgy, before proceeding to receive Holy Communion.

"Peace to this house!" ([Lk 10:5](#)). In following the Lord Jesus, Christ's faithful are called to be peacemakers. Those who do this work will be blessed and called children of God (cf. [Mt 5:9](#)). Peace is the great gift which Christ's disciples must proclaim to everyone, according to the mandate received from the Father (cf. [Jn 20:21](#)). This mission of peace has never been more timely in Africa, because of her conflicts, wars and violence. Seeking peace requires various initiatives: an embassy to "ask terms of peace" ([Lk 14:32](#)), dialogue and honourable relations. Peace has personal, familial and communitarian aspects. To the sinful, penitent woman, the Lord offers forgiveness and peace (cf. [Lk 7:50](#)). The disciples bring peace to the people they visited in their homes (cf. [Mt 10:13](#); [Lk 10:5-6](#)). Peace is destined in every way for everyone, starting with the disciples themselves: "Be at peace with one another" ([Mk 9:50](#)).

Jesus Christ "came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near" ([Eph 2:17](#)). The Church never tires in proclaiming the blessedness of reconciliation, justice and peace in the oftentimes unsure paths taken by the world and in the agonizing moments of history. In doing so, the Church is faithful to her Lord who "went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every infirmity" ([Mt 9:35](#)). Jesus Christ, while

clearly affirming that his Kingdom is not of this world (cf. [Jn 18:36](#)), gave many signs of it in the course of his life on earth by coming to the aid of people in spiritual and material need. The full realization of the Kingdom will only come about in heaven, when the elect, those reconciled to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, will live the fullness of justice and peace in the communion of all the saints, among whom the Blessed Virgin Mary occupies a special place. To the maternal intercession of Mary, Our Lady of Africa and Queen of Peace, we entrust the apostolic efforts of the bishops who will participate at the Second Special Assembly for Africa, under the wise and devoted guidance of the Holy Father, [Pope Benedict XVI](#). May the signs of the Kingdom be increasingly multiplied for the good of the Catholic Church and that of other Churches and Christian communities; may it also be so for other religious denominations, those who have peace, justice and reconciliation at heart and all people of good will on the great continent of Africa and the adjacent Islands.

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Vatican City, 19 March 2009

INTRODUCTION

1. In the wake of the Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on *The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church*, preparations for the Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops are now entering their final phase. The *Instrumentum laboris* summarizes the responses to the *Lineamenta* received from the episcopal conferences, the Eastern Catholic Churches *sui iuris*, the dicasteries of the Roman Curia and the Union of Superiors General. The document is greatly enriched by the fact that these reflections come at a time when the Church is celebrating the Jubilee Year of St. Paul, the Apostle to the Nations.

2. In keeping with its purpose, this working document aims at generating thought, prompting discussion and guiding and sustaining the collegial discernment of the Pastors, who will be gathered in synodal assembly in communion with the Bishop of Rome, [Pope Benedict XVI](#). In doing so, they will follow the age-old ecclesial tradition in Africa, defended in ancient times by Saint Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage^[1], of listening to the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

3. To achieve this objective, the *Instrumentum laboris* presents the material in four chapters. The first begins with a brief overview of contemporary African society in the period since the First Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops (1994). It then considers the implementation of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* and concludes by examining the theological aspects of the topic of the Second Assembly. Treating the three aspects of socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural life and recounting experiences within the Church, the second chapter describes the “openings” and, above all, the “obstacles” encountered by the Church and society on the road to reconciliation, justice and peace. The third chapter sets forth the characteristics of the Church as Family of God in her

desire to serve as a force opening paths to reconciliation, justice and peace. Finally, the fourth chapter is an account of what the Church's members and institutions have already undertaken to promote reconciliation, justice and peace in Africa.

4. In studying the *Lineamenta*, the Church in Africa had the opportunity to reflect on the contemporary state of African societies and to make an examination of conscience. It seems now, therefore, that she ought not to retire into herself. Instead, she is to venture forth cordially receiving others and carrying out her mission *ad gentes!*

CHAPTER I THE CHURCH IN AFRICA TODAY

5. The Church's understanding of the African continent is based upon the concrete, everyday experiences of Christian communities. Though positive happenings in these communities oftentimes go unnoticed, they have a depth unlike the clamorous, tragic happenings seen many times in the media. Generally speaking, Particular Churches are witnessing the Holy Spirit at work in African societies. In a special manner, the same is seen to be happening in the Church, especially since the First Special Assembly for Africa.

I. FROM THE FIRST TO THE SECOND SPECIAL ASSEMBLY FOR AFRICA

6. Since the last synodal assembly, held in 1994, African society has undergone a significant change. Generally speaking, some basic, human problems still exist. However, there are signs which call for a thorough examination of questions already highlighted 15 years ago in the religious, political, economic and cultural spheres.

1. From 1994 to 2009: A New Social Context

7. In the first place, Particular Churches have raised a hymn of thanksgiving. Indeed, the release of people from the yoke of dictatorial regimes is heralding a new era. A culture based on democratic principles, however fragile, is coming about, as seen in the various elections which have taken place on the continent. During the period of political transition in some countries, the Church's impartiality in political affairs was acknowledged and appreciated, when bishops were asked to preside over sovereign national conferences and the lay faithful took initiatives to promote truly democratic institutions. In this regard, mention should be made of the framework for an accord, signed 12 December 1997 and ratified 2 June 1999, by the Holy See and the Republic of Gabon on principles and certain legal measures in their relations and working together.

8. African leaders are increasingly becoming aware of their responsibility and are seizing this moment in history to face conflicts—oftentimes tragically violent—which have come about as a result of elections, a sign in politics of growth towards establishing a State ruled by law. The presence of such leaders ensures the process of mediation in countries in crisis or in search of peaceful solutions. The conflict between Cameroon and Nigeria concerning the peninsula of Bakassi was resolved in an exemplary manner under the guidance of the United Nations. Generally speaking, the creation of the African Union and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) are welcome signs of a willingness on the part of those in politics to provide a vision and strategic plan to assist Africa emerge from poverty and marginalization in the overall movement of globalization. The African Mechanism for

Evaluation by Peers (MAEP) is a tool which Africa has at its disposal to evaluate its well-taken efforts in both democratic culture and the economy. On the national level, the example of the “Truth and Reconciliation Commission” in South Africa and elsewhere has succeeded in utilizing the traditional African model of the “palaver tree” and Christian elements (for example, pardoning persons who confess their sins), so as to avoid countries falling into chaos. However, a question comes to mind: “Is the effectiveness of such commissions not limited by their voluntary character and the lack of some form of reparation or compensation?”.

9. The Church can guide Christians and non-Christians in this process, notably through the various structures which are part of her pastoral programmes for her members and society.

Inspired by Sacred Scripture, Small Christian Communities (SCC)^[2] are actively involved in social life.

10. The Church has witnessed the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit in these communities^[3] seen in an increase in baptisms, in priestly and religious vocations, in movements and associations of the lay faithful, etc. In various ways, Africa is showing signs of a great thirst for God. Paradoxically, this is even seen in the proliferation of the sects. The Church today, two thousands years since the birth of St. Paul, repeats with conviction the words of the great Apostle to the Nations: “For if I preach the Gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!” (*1 Cor 9:16*). In these times, where has Christ sent his disciples in African society to announce the Good News? In the new *areopaghi* on the African continent, how is one to speak of Jesus Christ?

Discerning, in the Holy Spirit, the Roots of Africa’s Suffering

11. In considering all things in the light of the Holy Spirit, the Particular Churches well understand that the wounded, human heart is the ultimate hiding place for the cause of everything destabilizing the African continent.^[4] Selfishness nurtures greed, corruption and the allurements of gain. It is the driving force in the misappropriation of goods and riches destined for entire populations. The thirst for power leads to contempt for all the elementary rules of good governance, takes advantage of people’s lack of knowledge, manipulates political, ethnic, tribal and religious differences and creates cultures where warriors are considered heroes and people need to be paid back for past sacrifices and wrongs committed. Basically, what blackens African society comes from the human heart (Cf. *Mt 15:18-19*; *Mk 7:15*; see also *Gen 4*).

12. Outside forces, in complicity with men and women on the African continent, exploit the wounded state of the human heart, a condition not exclusive to African society. They fuel wars so as to sell arms. They back those in power, irrespective of human rights and democratic principles, so as to guarantee economic benefit (the exploitation of natural resources, the acquisition of important markets, etc.). They threaten to destabilize entire nations and to eliminate persons who wish to free themselves from their oppression.

13. Globalization, an accepted fact of this century, is tending to marginalize Africa. To speak of problems and solutions in Africa is impossible without considering the other continents, their economic institutions, financiers and their network of information, all of which have a considerable impact on African society. The ecclesial communities in Africa look to the synod fathers to examine this formidable situation for which African societies are partly responsible and partly victims.^[5]

2. The Synodal Assembly: A Continuing Dynamic

14. The Pastors in Africa, in union with the Bishop of Rome, who presides over the universal communion in charity,^[6] feel that further discussion needs to be done on the problems already treated at the preceding Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops and taken up in the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*. The present synodal assembly then is to be considered in the continuing dynamic of the preceding one. This is also the case with not only the subjects to be discussed collegially but the Christian perspective required.

15. In effect, the aforementioned problems were already treated by the synod fathers.^[7] At the time, they used the model of the Church in Africa as the Family of God which evangelizes through witnessing: “You are my witnesses” (*Acts 1:8*). At the dawn of the twenty-first century, the Church wishes to continue to reflect on her mission of communion and her commitment to serve society in proclaiming the Gospel from a new vantage point, that of being “the salt of the earth” and “the light of the world” (*Mt 5:13,14*).^[8]

16. As for the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, the *Lineamenta* invited the Church in Africa “to take an inventory and make an examination of conscience; in other words, to ask three basic questions: What has *Ecclesia in Africa* accomplished? What has the Church in Africa done with *Ecclesia in Africa*? What remains to be done...in response to the evolving situations on the African continent?”^[9]

Since the First Special Assembly for Africa and Ecclesia in Africa

17. As a guide for the Church in Africa in her activity, the First Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops proposed the model of the Church as Family of God. The Assembly also set down a number of conditions to add credibility to her witness: reconciliation, justice and peace. It also recommended, among other things: the formation of Christians in justice and peace, an assertion of the prophetic role of the Church; a just salary for workers^[10]; and the establishment of Justice and Peace Commissions^[11]. In retrospect, what has taken place?

18. A great majority of responses from the Particular Churches confirms that *Ecclesia in Africa* has been put into action and continues to be used as a guide. However, in some places, the exhortation has not been sufficiently distributed and implemented, despite its clear recommendations. Efforts should still be made to receive its message, which always remains pertinent and timely. For this to happen, some suggest using the radio, the printed word and the new technologies of information and communication. Catechesis, liturgical celebrations and theological congresses, each in their own way, can make a particular contribution. Specialists ought to make a thorough evaluation of the reception of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation to show what has been done and what still remains to be done.

19. Locally speaking, certain Particular Churches have described ways in which the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation has been implemented:

- *Plenary Assemblies of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (S.E.C.A.M./S.C.E.A.M)*: notably those of 1997, 2000.

- *Plan for pastoral activity*. Some episcopal conferences and dioceses have devised plans for pastoral activity.

- The *biblical apostolate*, including translating the Bible in local languages,^[12] has led to a renewal of interest in reading Sacred Scripture and has made celebrations of the Word of God more dynamic, more participatory and more effective.

- *Small Christian Communities*^[13] are truly places for studying, meditating upon and sharing the Word of God. They are seeking ways of expressing the Christian faith in the typical settings of a traditional African community. For example, celebrating funerals during a Eucharistic liturgy in the house of the deceased, as a reminder of the Christian hope in the resurrection and the family as the living cell of the Church as Family of God, is proving to be of great assistance to the faith.^[14]

- *The Family*.^[15] Evangelization of the family has consisted, among other things, in viewing the family, “the domestic Church”, as the means of Christian encounter and the place to work against all conduct contrary to the divine plan for the family: for example, homosexuality, prostitution and abortion.

- *Youth*.^[16] The Church has established or consolidated structures for the formation of youth and appointed youth apostolate chaplains to coordinate their participation in the life of the Church on the national and international level.

- *Theological congresses and symposia*. Many meetings of research and discussion have permitted further treatment and development of questions highlighted at the First Assembly and set forth in *Ecclesia in Africa*.

- *The Church as mediator*.^[17] The Church has served as mediator among parties in conflict; she has also defended and sustained the cause of the most vulnerable in society (“a voice for the voiceless”).

- *Integral development*.^[18] The Church is present in the fight against every type of human poverty through *Caritas* and other pastoral care programmes in society. Some diocesan and inter/diocesan synods have been organized to reflect on the challenges of poverty and economic dependency.

- *Justice and Peace Commissions*.^[19] These commissions have been truly instruments of evangelization in awakening the Christian conscience to the defence of human rights, good governance, etc. Together with other Church organizations geared towards society, they have contributed to the civic formation of Christians and non-Christians in fostering justice, peace and reconciliation.

- *The means of social communications*.^[20] The Church’s involvement in the media, particularly radio, is continuing to grow and provide a powerful means in communicating reconciliation, justice and peace as aspects of the Good News of salvation.

- *Ecumenical and interreligious dialogue*.^[21] Engagement in dialogue has shown itself in a tangible way to be the instrument of mutual respect in healthcare activity (notably among those with HIV/AIDS, malaria and cholera), in the promotion of peace, good governance and democracy and in other concrete initiatives.

- *The scourge of AIDS*.^[22] Some structures (hospitals, healthcare centres) and organizations have been established to combat this disease and to assist the sick and those around them.

- *Self-sufficiency*.^[23] Some Particular Churches have initiated projects to generate revenue (e.g., banks, insurance companies, farm cooperatives, etc.) to sustain the work of evangelization.

Tasks to be Done

20. The tasks determined at the First Assembly still require attention. The Second Assembly must redress the lack of a systematic follow-up in implementing the results of the First Assembly and the contents of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation. Some Particular Churches have proposed considering the following social aspects:

- *The family.* Responses show that creativity is necessary in addressing the spiritual and moral needs of the family. Some Particular Churches, seeking to assist couples and guide families in the challenges they encounter, are wondering whether special approaches and programmes of service should not be directed towards the family.
- *The dignity of women.* A great number of Particular Churches think that the dignity of women still needs to be fostered in both the Church and society, since women and the laity in general are not fully integrated in the Church's structures of responsibility and the planning of her pastoral programmes.
- *Prophetic mission.* Seeking peace and justice is an integral part of the Church's prophetic mission in proclaiming the Gospel (cf. [Lk 4:16-19](#)). However, such activity is often impaired, due to the pressure of governments and a lack of financial resources. The question of justice and peace then returns to Justice and Peace Commissions and the development of *Caritas* or organs of pastoral activity specializing in this sector. How can the intrinsic unity be shown between seeking peace and justice and the Church's proclamation of the Gospel?
- *Communications and the new technologies of information and communication.* Making radio authentically Catholic still requires effort. The media must be evangelized through the formation of those who work in its various segments. The new technologies of information and communication are today an inescapable place for evangelization. In what ways can the Church become more involved?
- *Self-sufficiency.* A great number of programmes in the Church in Africa still largely depends on donors. Does this state-of-affairs run the risk of, on the one hand, accepting funds from organizations which do not respect human rights, and on the other, sacrificing autonomy and propriety in programmes, projects and structures to the detriment of the Church and those who benefit from them?

II. SOME CRITICAL PLACES IN THE LIFE OF AFRICAN SOCIETY

21. The problems submitted to the synod fathers have a great impact on the Christian conscience. Because Christians are also the sons and daughters of given societies, the same problems exist in both society and the Church. "The Churches in Africa ...bear in them the fragility of the present situation of African countries at the institutional, financial, theological cultural and juridic levels."^[24] These situations can be regrouped to fall under three main categories: political, economic and cultural.

1. Socio-Political Sphere

22. In recent years, some hopeful signs of a growing civic consciousness have appeared in the socio-political sphere. Activity towards a more civic society is increasingly seen in the struggle for human rights. In this regard, some men and women politicians are in earnest pursuit of a renaissance on the continent. Here and there, movements seeking an intra-African resolution to conflicts attest that some politicians in Africa are keenly aware of their responsibility to educate their people politically and to guide their nations towards a life of peace and prosperity.

23. Nevertheless, society continues to struggle in eliminating many obstacles. Some political leaders show an insensitivity to the needs of their people. They follow their own pursuits and hold in disdain any idea of the common good. Lacking a sense of the State and democratic principles, they work out political deals which are unilateral, partisan, favour-driven and ethnocentric. At the same time, they foster division to secure their rule. In some places, the party in power tends to identify itself with the State. In this way, the notion of authority is conceived as “power”—parties of power, power-sharing—and not as “service” (cf. *Mt* 20:24ff; also see *1 Kings* 3). Sadly, some women and men in political life are displaying a grave lack of culture in political matters. They unscrupulously violate human rights and use religion and religious institutions for their own purpose, while ignoring, among other things, the mission and function of religion and religious institutions in society. Therefore, unsurprisingly, their response in political disputes is violence, thereby further exploiting the citizens’ lack of conscience and civic education. Only a stable political climate can foster economic growth and socio-cultural development.

2. The Socio-Economic Sphere

24. In the business world, some leaders in companies and corporations of businessmen and women are resolutely seeking to reform and stabilize the economy in their country. Paths of communication are improving in some regions on the continent. In some areas, Africans have established financial institutions, etc. Generally speaking, people are displaying a determination to create wealth so as to reduce poverty and misery and to improve the health of populations.

25. These efforts, however, have slowed down recently, due to the malfunctioning of State institutions, which are supposed to provide assistance to those who are part of the economy. Commerce, which takes place within the continent itself, can create a favourable economic environment for local production. However, because this is lacking, indigenous products bring low prices, oftentimes determined by the buyers themselves. Small producers have a difficulty obtaining credit and the sad state of the infrastructure of roads and travel routes hinders an easy flow of goods. Consequently, young people, faced with the lack of an agricultural plan, face no alternative but to leave their villages. However, given the growing rate of unemployment, recourse to the city is not proving to be an answer. Workers’ salaries are insufficient, if indeed they are paid at all. In some places, a true slavery still exists. Taxes are extreme and sometimes abusive. Likewise, international aid to institutions concerned with the fate of entire populations oftentimes comes with unacceptable conditions. Raw materials are exploited with permissions which lack any precise criteria.. At the same time, financial returns are largely detoured in ways which result in their unequal distribution in society.

26. Programmes proposed by international financial institutions for restructuring the African economy seem to be having a dire effect. This “imposed” restructuring has consequently lead to, on the one hand, a very fragile African economy, and, on the other, a deterioration of the fabric of society, seen in increased crime, the widening of the gap between the rich and the poor, and a massive migration from rural areas, leading to the overpopulation of cities.^[25]

27. The African continent is still being hit by famines and many crises in energy, an indication that global solutions and ethical measures are urgently needed to counteract the chaos created by the fall in markets.

28. Multinational organizations continue systematically to invade the continent in search of natural resources. In complicity with African leaders, they oppress local companies, buy thousands of hectares of land and expropriate populations from their lands. Their adverse effect on the environment and creation affects the peace and well-being of the African people and, thus, the prospects of their living in harmony.

29. The financial crisis, severely impacting financial institutions today, has various effects on the African continent as a whole:

- direct foreign investment is in jeopardy;
- African financial institutions will have difficulty obtaining credit from western banks and thus unable to make loans to companies and individuals with which populations can live in harmony;
- Development aid is also at risk, because financial projects, based on foreign funding (in difficulty), could be suspended, and the involvement of developed countries with poorer countries would equally be endangered;
- Developed markets are in peril, because of the recession and the lessening of a demand for African products (of materials noted above).

Thought must be given to the fact that (apart from South Africa) Africa is excluded in the search for solutions to the present international financial crisis.

3. Socio-Cultural Sphere

30. In many regions of the continent, African peoples maintain a deep love for their culture. Artists, musicians, sculptors, etc. give free reign to their genius through works which are increasingly becoming known. Being grounded in culture is understood to condition the integral development of individuals and communities. Furthermore, some men and women on the continent are forming associations to promote their proper cultural heritage. This is being decisively pursued by some States. Will these joint enterprises lead to safeguarding the values proper to Africa: a respect for elders; a respect for women as mothers; a culture of solidarity, mutual aid, hospitality and unity; a respect for life, honesty, truth, keeping one's word, etc., all of which are threatened by the arrival of people from other continents^[26] and the spread of the phenomenon of globalization?

31. The marring of a cultural identity has led to an interior instability in persons, which is seen in moral laxity, corruption, materialism, the destruction of an authentic idea of marriage and the notion of a sound family, the neglect of the elderly and the denial of a childhood to children. A culture of violence, division and warrior-heros has resulted from armed conflicts. A process organized to destroy the African identity seems to be taking place under the pretext of modernity. This is increasingly occurring through illiteracy, resulting from too little being invested in education by powerful public leaders. In this way, the education of youth succumbs to the influence of the false values propagated by the mass media, some politicians and other public figures.

32. Some false beliefs and practices from African cultures demand special attention. Witchcraft is tearing villages and urban societies apart. In the name of culture or ancestral traditions, women are victimized and abused in matters of inheritance and rites of widowhood, sexual mutilation, forced marriages, polygamy, etc.

33. The Particular Churches, feeling the impact of these situations which are occurring in the different spheres mentioned above, are eagerly awaiting the results of the discernment of synod fathers, when they consider these things from the vantage point of Revelation.

III. THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON THE SYNOD TOPIC

34. The final part of the formulation of the synod topic indicates how ecclesial communities are being called upon to serve reconciliation, justice and peace. This service is based on the words of Christ who tells his disciples that they are to be the "salt of the earth" (Mt 5:13) and

“light of the world” ([Mt 5:14](#)). This is what has to be done, if the Spirit of Christ, active in each member of the Church, is to produce the “good works” which will lead to reconciliation, justice and peace in the Church and society in Africa (cf. [Mt 5:16](#)).

1. Disciples of Christ as “Salt” and “Light”

The Context of Jesus’ Words

35. With his teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, recorded in [Mt 5: 3-10](#), Jesus sets forth his mission: to provide entry into the Kingdom of his Father to the poor, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for justice, the merciful, the pure of heart, the peacemakers and those persecuted for justice’ sake. Indeed, all those who are Christ’s disciples are called upon to collaborate in the coming of this Kingdom by attending to the hungry, the sick, the stranger, the humiliated (who are naked) and the prisoner; for the Lord has said “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these *my brethren*, you did it to me” ([Mt 25:40](#)).

Putting the Vision of Christ into Action

36. To make his mission a reality, Jesus increasingly involves his disciples. He prepares them for persecution, insults and all kinds of suffering “for my sake” ([Mt 5:11](#)). Indeed, following Christ in his mission of salvation means accepting suffering with him so as to share in his glory. This is seen in the lives of the saints of the African continent, notably in these last centuries: the Martyrs of Uganda (Charles Lwanga and his companions (martyred between 1885 and 1887), Saint [Daniel Camboni](#) (1831-1881), Saint [Josephine Bakhita](#) (1869-1947), Blessed [Charles de Foucauld](#) (1858-1916), Blessed Victoire Rasoamanarivo (1848-1894), Blessed Isidore Bakanja (circa 1880/1890-1909), Blessed Cyprian Michael Iwene Tansi (1903-1964), Blessed Clementine Nengapeta Anuarite (1914-19564). They have been the “salt” of the earth which they trod and a “light” to the world which beheld their lives.

37. The two figures of salt and light express the dual aspects of the identity of the disciple of Christ. The image of “salt of the earth” looks to the disciples as the active means of transforming the places where their sisters and brothers live. In effect, just as salt changes the flavour of food to which it is added, so Christ’s disciples are called to live in their local surroundings in such a way as to improve the flavour of humanity. Just as salt dissolves and becomes invisible, the initial impact of the disciple’s life escapes notice. However, it is in this way that the world will taste the transforming effect of the disciple’s presence. The lives of the saints and blessed, proposed by the Church as models for Christians, illustrate the effectiveness of this Christian witness in the life of societies, because society could not remain indifferent to their actions. It is necessary to believe that just as salt preserves, purifies and protects from corruption, a saintly life preserves what is best in humanity (its authentic values) and protects it from degeneracy (cf. [Gen 18: 17-33](#)).

38. The second image calls upon the disciples to identify themselves as the “light of the world”. Jesus did not ask them to do this in a showy manner; for he denounced such persons as hypocrites (cf. [Mt 6:1ff](#)). Nevertheless, light is destined to shine; it cannot be hidden. Like a city on a mountaintop, it will always be visible (cf. [Mt 5:14-16](#)). In other words, disciples, who are the light, cannot pass unnoticed. Through their actions, then, they shine on people a light which makes everything inhuman in them perfectly visible and intelligible. They do this through their “good works” of feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, welcoming the stranger, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and aged, showing concern for the prisoner, etc. (cf. [Mt 25:35-36](#)). The life of an ecclesial community, which truly incarnates the Word, becomes a lamp on the threshold of society as a whole, enabling people to avoid the paths which lead to death and take instead those which lead to life, that is to say, in following Jesus, “the way, the truth and the life” ([Jn 14:6](#)).

39. In summary, using these two images, Jesus urges those who hear him to transform human society through their presence and to indicate, through the example of their lives, the paths leading to the Kingdom of God, which is promised to those who are battered, broken and marginalized in society. In this manner, the Kingdom of God will appear as a land of consolation, satiety and mercy and an inheritance of God's sons and daughters. This Kingdom is extended through the actions of the disciple-servants who are attentive to every human suffering. In so doing, they put into action the prayer which Jesus taught his Church: "Father...thy kingdom come!" ([Mt 6:10](#)).

2. The Church as Family of God and "Diaconia"

The Church-Family in Service

40. At the invitation of Christ, the Master, the community of disciples, which is the Church, becomes one Family composed of God's sons and daughters (cf. [Mt 5:16, 45, 48](#); [6:26,32](#); [7:11](#)). The members of this family are characterized by the same love shown by the one and only-begotten Son. They are called to follow the example of this elder brother through fraternal service or *diakonia*. In effect, after having washed the feet of his disciples, Jesus declared to them: "For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you" ([Jn 13:15](#)). In the Parable of the Good Samaritan, the lawyer knew well how to read the Law to extract what was essential, that is to say, the love of God and neighbour (cf. [Lk 10:25-28](#)). Jesus therefore said in response: "Go and do likewise". In fact, the example given the lawyer in the parable is the model of *diakonia*, through which love is translated into action in the image of the Good Samaritan (cf. [Lk 10:29-37](#)). This figure also points to Jesus himself, who submitted to every form of human suffering. This then is the model for the Church-Family as she looks with concern to the continent of Africa in need of reconciliation, justice and peace.

In Service to Justice and Peace

41. According to the words of the psalmist, "Justice and peace shall embrace" ([Ps 84:11](#)). This characterizes the Kingdom of God, which is to come through praying to the Father: "Thy Kingdom come!". Surely, the Church-Family knows she is sent forth in Africa to bring about a world of justice and peace, truly a world in which God reigns supreme as a result of being reconciled with its God and with itself. In these days, what roads must be taken to address the troubles and injustices which the world pretends not to see?

In Service to Reconciliation

42. Jesus Christ is the source of God's reconciliation to humanity as a whole and to each person individually. He is also the means leading to reconciliation among peoples (cf. [Mt 6:12](#); [Rom 5: 10-11](#)). This is the basis for the Church's mission. The Church as Family of God in Africa feels entrusted with the "ministry of reconciliation" ([2 Cor 5:18](#)). She is the messenger of "the Gospel of peace" ([Eph 6:15](#)), which makes her one Body and Temple of the Holy Spirit. Following Christ's example, she is the worker of reconciliation in her earthly body. As builders of communion, Christians are to call African society to a union of hearts and to set an example for them through the witness of their lives. Reconciliation in life comes about by making room for forgiveness (cf. [Mt 5:23](#); [Eph 2:14,15](#)).

43. In effect, Jesus said, "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" ([Jn 13:35](#)). Since that time, "being" takes precedence over "acting". "Being" in love with one another is the manner in which each cell in the Mystical Body, the Church, will make an appeal to the brethren in Africa to be reconciled to God and one another (cf. [Mt 5:23ff](#); [2 Cor 5:20](#)). The Church will then display her sacramental aspect as

an efficacious sign which makes present in Africa the grace of reconciliation between God and humanity and among people themselves, wrought by Jesus Christ, who became our Justice and our Peace.

3. The Justice of the Kingdom

44. The justice called for by Jesus is primarily that of the Kingdom (cf. [Mt 6:33](#)). This justice was illustrated by Joseph, the “just” ([Mt 1:19](#)), because he followed his conscience, where the Word of God dwelt, and rendered to Mary, his spouse, and the infant in her womb what was their due: the protection of life. This greater justice of the Kingdom goes beyond Law; it is a virtue.^[27] It does not deny human justice, but integrates and transcends it. In this way, justice becomes a path leading to forgiveness and true reconciliation, and thereby restoring communion.

45. The Church-Family, the dwelling place of Christ, the Word of the Father, feels called to serve the justice of the Kingdom. First of all, she must live this justice within herself, i.e., in her members, so that Africa’s brothers and sisters will choose the arduous road of redemption and follow it. In effect, true justice demands that persons individually are owed a respect based on their dignity as God’s sons or daughters. At the present moment, in many places on the African continent “men ... by their injustice have made truth a captive” ([Rom 1:18](#)). Truth then needs to be set free. As disciples of Christ in service to justice, the Church’s members, “through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus” ([Rom 3:24](#)), “ought to lay down [their] lives for the brethren” ([1 Jn 3:16](#)). In this way, peace too will come to Africa: “peace is the fruit of justice (cf. [Is 32:17](#))”.^[28]

4. The Peace of the Kingdom

46. What is the peace which is sought? Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you” ([Jn 14:27](#)). The peace which the world gives is fragile and unsure. True peace is offered in and through Christ. “For he is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility, [through] his flesh ..., that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and ... through the cross, ...bringing the hostility to an end. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father” ([Eph 2:14-18](#)).

47. The mission to serve peace will consist in building peace in each member of the Body of Christ, so that everyone might become new men and women, capable of being engaged in the peace process in Africa. Peace, in effect, is not primarily the fruits of structures nor does it take place outside of persons. It is primarily born from within, in the interior of individuals and communities. Conversion of heart seeks a “new heart” and a “new spirit” ([Ez 36:26](#)). It is an act that leads to a transformation which, in turn, has its effects. The genuinely Christian life of the disciple, a fruit of *metanoia* (cf. [Mk 1:15](#)), gives birth to the hope of transforming conduct, habits and mentalities. Consequently, the identity of each of the Church’s members as disciples is essential for the transformation of African society. This is also the case for the world as a whole, if, in collaboration with all people of good will, the Church is to bring about a better, more authentic, more just, more peaceful, more reconciled, more fraternal and more happy world. Indeed, persons who are disheartened by life, because of incessant political conflicts, intermittent wars, poverty and social, political and economic injustices, will here find hope and a taste for living.

CHAPTER II

RECONCILIATION, JUSTICE AND PEACE: AN URGENT NEED

48. The aforementioned areas of attention and involvement and the reflections on the synod topic from the Particular Churches give some indication of the “openings” and “obstacles” on the road to reconciliation, justice and peace.^[29] The Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI reminded the Pastors of the African continent that “the commitment of the faithful to the service of reconciliation, justice and peace is urgently needed.”^[30]

I. ON THE ROAD TO RECONCILIATION

49. Some responses have said that, to create a new path towards harmony, certain States have employed traditional models of reconciliation and the Christian practice of the Sacrament of Reconciliation (sovereign national conferences, the “Truth and Reconciliation Commission” in South Africa, etc.). Though results are varied and imperfect, they seem to be an invitation to the synodal assembly to address experiences which are obstacles to reconciliation.

1. Reconciliation: Experiences in Society

50. *The socio-political aspect of reconciliation.* Some African societies have been ruined by their political leaders. Others have witnessed tragic scenes of xenophobia, where foreigners were looked upon as symbolizing the misfortunes of society and became scape-goats. As a result, persons were burnt alive and hacked; families scattered and villages destroyed. In still other countries, some Particular Churches mention that political parties have used ethnic, tribal or regional sentiments to rally populations to their cause in a conquest for power, instead of fostering living together in peace.

51. *The socio-economic aspect of reconciliation.* Some have noted that bad management and its consequent misery has caused trafficking in human beings, the prostitution trade and minors’ being forced to work. This has largely contributed to the destruction of family ties, the destabilization of entire communities and the displacement of thousands of refugees. On the national level, areas rich in oil and mining are very quickly becoming the kindling points of conflict, indeed of wars between neighbouring peoples and nations.

52. *The socio-cultural aspect of reconciliation.* Some parts of the media (radio, press, television) have disseminated information and images which have incited populations to violence and hate and brought serious harm to the values which hold the family and society together: respect for elders and the dignity of women as mothers and protectors of life, etc. People are concerned about a growing loss in a cultural identity, primarily among the young and a consequent disregard for African Traditional Religion, which further shows the lack of appreciation for values viewed to be properly African. In certain parts of the continent, some mention that relations between one religion and another are degenerating into a true Christian and Muslim rivalry.

2. Reconciliation: Experiences within the Church

53. Particular Churches are asking the synod fathers to help the Church in Africa better communicate her prophetic message, allowing her to speak authoritatively to political leaders. Her message will not be effective, unless she fosters unity among her own members and resolves any conflicting signs in her life of witness. In this regard, divisions based on ethnic, tribal, regional or national lines and a xenophobic mentality have been observed in some ecclesial communities and in the words and attitudes of some Pastors. Moreover, responses to the *Lineamenta* indicate a certain strife between bishops and their presbyterate

and a tendency of some bishops in national episcopal conferences to take positions favouring a specific political party. As a result, these episcopal conferences are no longer able to speak with one voice in an appeal for unity.

3. Achieving Reconciliation: What Questions Need to be Asked?

54. The responses note that experiences in Church and society are calling upon the Church to devise ways and means to rebuild communion, unity and episcopal or priestly fellowship; to regain courage in her prophetic mission; and to commit herself to forming lay leaders who are committed to their faith, so that they can work in politics to bring the many different people in society to live together in peace. Such is the case also in the formation of priests and women and men religious who are eager to be signs of and witnesses to the Kingdom. The synodal assembly will provide the opportunity to discuss the underlying causes of the conflicts which are so much a part of the African continent.

II. ON THE ROAD TO JUSTICE

55. Some responses mention that the African concept of justice is the same as reconciliation and peace, because it is grounded in the idea of restoring harmony—individually or in society as a whole—between those who give offense and the offended parties. So many obstacles exist on the road to justice, the faithful are awaiting some proposals from the synod fathers which will assist them in their work.

1. Justice: Experiences in Society

56. *The socio-political aspect of justice.* In demanding justice, some “ethnic minorities” or regions, where rights have been infringed, take up arms and wage wars. Rioting and the expulsion of different groups of people living in the same country are grave acts of injustice, which in many cases are allowed to go unpunished. Oftentimes, judicial institutions and those who fight corruption are sieged by political forces. Those who lose power use security forces to subdue citizens who hold contrary opinions. The responses mention other forms of injustice: the death penalty; the inhumane treatment of prisoners which is oftentimes seen in the overcrowding of prisons; excessive delays in the justice system; the torture of prisoners; and the expulsion of refugees with no regard for their dignity.

57. *The socio-economic aspect of justice.* The African Mechanism of Evaluation by Peers (MAEP) seeks to identify the forms and causes of the corruption which rages on the continent and goes unpunished. In some places, natural resources are confiscated and depleted by special-interest groups. Bad management, the diverting of public funds and the exodus of capital to foreign banks—already denounced by the Church in Africa at the last synod^[31]—are forms of injustice which are done with impunity. The Church must speak out against these unjust practices, raising her voice for the voiceless.

58. Farm workers, on whom a great part of the African economy depends, are victims of injustice in marketing their products. They are often paid a very low price for their goods. Paradoxically, in some parts of Africa, the cost is even set by the buyers themselves. Populations already suffering from a disadvantage are thereby further impoverished. The seeding campaign of proponents of Genetically Modified Food, which purports to give assurances for food safety, should not overlook the true problems of agriculture in Africa: the lack of cultivatable land, water, energy, access to credit, agricultural training, local markets, road infrastructures, etc. This campaign runs the risk of ruining small landholders, abolishing traditional methods of seeding and making farmers dependent on the production companies of OGM. Furthermore, the problem of climate change, whose effects are being felt in arid areas, is compromising the modest gains of African economies. Will the synod fathers be able to remain unresponsive to these questions weighing so heavily on the shoulders of their

countrymen?

59. *The socio-cultural aspect of justice.* Culture also suffers from injustices that need to be examined and eradicated, notably nepotism and tribalism which are oftentimes practiced under the pretext of claiming duty and assistance to one's "brother". Everywhere on the continent, women continue to be subjected to many forms of injustice: domestic violence; acts of domination by their husbands; polygamy which deforms the sacred character of marriage and the family and creates a rivalry between spouses and the children they bear; lack of respect for the dignity and rights of widows; prostitution; and the genital mutilation of women. Relations among nations need to consider the legal, administrative and practical aspects of the phenomenon of globalization. As a result of an invasion of models based on military and economic forces, Africa is particularly vulnerable.

60. The educational system, including higher education, is insufficient, due to overcrowding in classes and an inadequate teacher/student ratio. Education programmes are geared to the formation of those seeking employment and not to those who will create employment. Likewise, the unemployment rate soars, because employment cannot be found for everyone. Considering the Church's commitment to education, the Particular Churches want the synod fathers to appeal to and motivate those responsible for education to seek a solution in these matters.

2. Justice: Experiences in the Church

61. While reflecting on the situation of society, Particular Churches also pointed out injustices within their own communities. In the matter of collaboration, women are oftentimes given an inferior role. In Church structures, just salaries are not always guaranteed. Pastors sometimes lack transparency in their management of Church goods.

3. Fostering Justice: What Questions Need to be Asked?

62. The synodal assembly should heed the cry of the poor, minorities, women deprived of their dignity, those on the periphery of society, poorly paid workers, refugees, migrants and prisoners who are awaiting the establishment of a structured chaplaincy and not just designated chaplains. "It is the duty of all—especially Christians—to work energetically to establish universal brotherhood, the indispensable foundation of authentic justice and the condition for a durable peace."^[32]

III. ON THE ROAD TO PEACE

63. Some roads to peace have been opened by Pastors, by those in the consecrated life, by Small Christian Communities and by the lay faithful, as individuals or members of associations. However, some obstacles still remain.

1. Peace: Experiences in Society

64. *The socio-political aspect of peace.* Political instability, so seriously compromising peace on the African continent, has deep historical roots: slavery, colonization and neo-colonization. Despite the fact that the migration of peoples internally and externally is a normal social phenomenon, it has become, in the final analysis, a source of unrest and conflict. Surely, peace is more than the silence of arms, yet conflicts are a symptom of its absence (The Democratic Republic of Congo, Zimbabwe, Somalia, Sudan [Darfour], etc.). Transitions in the politics of the democratic exercise of power has propelled on the world stage scenes of fratricide, orchestrated by rival parties.

65. *The socio-economic aspects of peace.* Responses mention that violence is often the response to unemployment, massive and clandestine migration and, primarily, the excessive

investment in armaments, while thousands of the poor are increasingly victimized through unfair economic practices and social injustices. In this matter, the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI observed that “the countries of the industrially developed world profit immensely from the sale of arms, while the ruling oligarchies in many poor countries wish to reinforce their stronghold by acquiring even more sophisticated weaponry.”^[33] For the most part, the wars in many regions of Africa are tied to the economy as such.

66. *The socio-cultural aspect of peace.* The victims most affected by the absence of peace are families. The tearing apart of the family and the influence of the media have progressively lead to juvenile delinquency, bad moral behaviour, abandonment to drugs, etc. Some think, however, that a more basic reason for the instability of societies on the continent is linked to cultural alienation and racial discrimination, which have engendered along the course of African history an inferiority complex, fatalism and fear. A disdain for African languages and oral African literature has lead to the rejection of values which are properly African. The absence of these points of reference has created instability among young people.

2. Peace: Experiences in the Church

67. On various levels, the Church has participated in national peace efforts in some countries as a result of the teaching and activity of her Pastors. In the Great Lakes Region, episcopal conferences have worked to build peace by fostering reconciliation among the young people of the countries in conflict.

3. Cultivating Peace: What Questions Need to be Asked?

68. Particular Churches want the synodal assembly to discuss ways to build peace in society through mutual assistance, a willingness to welcome others, fraternal service of the most vulnerable (children, the sick, elderly people), justice and love between sisters and brothers and the reestablishment of parental authority in families. The Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI in his *Message of Peace*, stated: “The family is the first and indispensable teacher of peace...because it enables its members in decisive ways to experience peace.”^[34]

69. The responses confirm, as stated Pope John Paul II, that “God can create openings for peace where only obstacles and closures are apparent”.^[35] The Pope further emphasized: “No peace without justice, no justice without forgiveness,”^[36] for “true peace is ‘the work of justice’ (*Is 12:17*).”^[37] This is the justice of the Kingdom which incorporates and transcends all laws and limits. This is the justice which the Church-Family of God wants to serve. Indeed, this justice manifests the originality of the Gospel’s message of reconciliation, justice and peace.

CHAPTER III THE CHURCH-FAMILY OF GOD: “SALT OF THE EARTH” AND “LIGHT OF THE WORLD”

70. In responding to the questions in the *Lineamenta*, Particular Churches called for roads to be opened to bring about reconciliation, justice and peace on the continent. For this to be done, the synod fathers will discuss how their communities can be grounded in African culture, the living Tradition of the Church and the values of the Gospel. They will have to discover a thousands ways for the Church to act as “salt” and “light” in the midst of Africa,

collaborating with African society and working on its behalf.

I. GROUNDED IN A TRANSFIGURED AFRICAN CULTURE

71. The Particular Churches confirmed that the challenge of inculturation is more crucial than ever for African societies, whose cultures are being threatened.

1. The Challenges of Globalization

72. At the beginning of the year, the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI noted that the human family “today is increasingly unified as a result of globalization.”^[38] Within the context of this phenomenon which infringes on Africa’s rights, some responses suggest that the synod fathers look for ways the Church can foster a greater integration of societies and countries on the continent. As industrialized nations pursue their present course of seeking access to the greatest mining reserves of the world, the abundance of natural resources on the African continent continue to pose a threat to peace, justice and reconciliation. Moreover, societies increasingly run the risk of being seriously harmed by the logic of the world economy which disregards what is truly a part of the human person, that is to say, the best of local African traditions and how the faith is lived in Africa.^[39]

2. The Necessity of Being Grounded in Culture

73. The Gospel is grounded in the human terrain of culture. African societies show how powerless they are in the breakdown of cultures. If the Church is to form authentic Christians,^[40] she must give serious attention to grounding the Gospel message in culture. In this Pauline Jubilee Year, the Particular Churches want the synod fathers to place St. Paul at the centre of their discussion, for “the Apostle himself was an exceptional craftsman of inculturation of the biblical message into new cultural references. This is what the Church is called upon to perform even today ... She should make the Word of God penetrate into the many cultures and express it according to their languages, their concepts, their symbols and their religious traditions.”^[41]

3. The Leaven of the Gospel in African Values

74. Responses refer to a need to improve pastoral activity so that the truths and values of African cultures might be touched and transformed by the Gospel. In this regard, the Servant of God, Pope John Paul II had the following to say: “*Inculturation* which you rightly promote will truly be a reflection of the Incarnation of the Word, when a culture, transformed and regenerated by the Gospel, brings forth from its own living tradition original expressions of Christian life, celebration and thought.”^[42] Christians, grounded in the Scriptures translated into local languages, will be able to understand the Word of God and hear his Word. They will obey him according to the common understanding of the word “heard” in the languages of Africa so as to live the values of the Gospel in a profound way, yet without betraying these values through practices and conduct which are culturally admissible but contrary to the spirit of Christ (cf. Mt 5:17). St. Paul insists: “For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 8: 38-39).

II. DRAWING STRENGTH FROM FAITH IN CHRIST

75. A majority of responses from the episcopal conferences emphasized that union with Christ in Baptism, which makes the Church’s members children of God, is a support to ecclesial communities in their work. They nourish their relationship to Christ in hearing the

Word of God, breaking the Eucharistic Bread and frequenting the Sacrament of Reconciliation (cf. [Acts 2:42](#)).

1. The Active Presence of Christ in Life

76. Faith in Christ, who is present and active, is a dynamic, moral force in Christians' lives, making them capable of living in solidarity and sharing with the poor, the sick, orphans and widows, all of whom are identified with Christ (cf. [Mt 25](#)) as they transmit his love, his goodness and his compassion. Consequently, Christ's disciples carry out their work in a conscientious manner, which is the basis for their taking charge of parishes to every extent possible and their forming future priests and consecrated persons in the midst of Small Christian Communities.

77. When questions arise, this faith always makes the Christian return to Christ, who is the model and reference point. He gives direction to life in discerning God's will, the will of the Father, in every situation of life. For Jesus "in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin" ([Heb 4:15](#)).

78. Because Jesus is Saviour and Lord, the Church has been able to take initiatives in promoting reconciliation, justice and peace. In the face of difficulties, she has not retreated from working against false values. She has been involved with Catholic communities of faith without adopting the easy paths to holiness proposed by the sects. The Lordship of Christ fills Christians with courage, self-control and peace in moments of persecution. Christians live in hope, for, Christ said, "In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" ([Jn 11:33](#)). And again, "I am with you always, to the close of the age" ([Mt 28:20](#)).

2. Christ, the Bread of Life

79. The Twelfth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the Word of God recalled that Christians are nourished at the table of Christ, the Bread of Life, the *koinonia* ("fraternal communion"),^[43] which they, in turn, communicate to society.

Eucharistic Rendez-vous

80. In the Eucharist, Christ remains with the Church and dwells in each Christian individually. Particular Churches attest to the fact that in his gift of self, Christ gathers his disciples and makes them a people, the sons and daughters of God, who are reconciled and at peace with the Father and one another, so that they, in turn, can be the means of reconciliation and workers of peace and justice. Taken up in the offering of Christ to his Father, Christ's disciples are able, in him, to engage in activity on behalf of peace and reconciliation and make themselves a gift of self-sacrifice, for "he [Jesus] laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" ([1 Jn 3:16](#)), so as to spread the Kingdom of the Father. The spiritual experience provided at Eucharistic celebrations, where Christ's Paschal mystery is renewed, inspires the disciples' involvement in the work of peace and reconciliation and provides them with the strength to go out to others in faith and love in witness to the Gospel.

81. The Eucharist is the Sacrament of Love. Since Love itself abides here, there is no room for hate, vengeance and injustice. Indeed, an ecclesial community built on the Eucharist becomes a genuine sacrament of unity, fellowship and reconciliation in the midst of humanity. In this Sacrament, the Lord wishes to crown with success every effort to make the world a place of glory for his Father, seeing that, according to St. Irenaeus, "the glory of God is a man truly alive."^[44]

82. This same Sacrament reconciles Christ's disciples to the Father and provides the healing of divisions through a penitential preparation, the exchange of the peace of Christ and the sharing of the Bread of Life, where Jesus himself nourishes the Church's members with his Body and his Word.

The Power of the Word of God

83. The Word of God nourishes faith and sustains apostolic activity. It inspires a person's life, enlightens daily events and offers criteria for discernment in activity.

84. As a force towards unity and the building of a more just and fraternal Christian community and society, the Word of God is the source of the reanimation and revivification of the community's members.^[45] Consequently, it is important to listen to, meditate upon and heighten the experience of the Word, which is the privileged place where the wonderful plan of God is realized for individuals and all creation. Experiences in families where the Bible is the centre of their lives and is part of the education of their children and the relations between parents, bear witness to the fact that the Word of God restores harmony and concord in the home and strengthens the bonds within the family. Familiarity with the Word of God, heard and shared in the family, helps form consciences and protects persons from straying into such things as concubinage, adultery and alcoholism. The Word of God keeps the family's eyes fixed on Jesus Christ.

85. The afore-mentioned experiences are an incentive to combat illiteracy and make a united effort to reduce the cost of bibles so that each Christian, or at least every family, might have access to one. If read and explained in groups or in Small Christian Communities, Sacred Scripture will become the dynamic force to renew and recreate African culture and fashion new men and women "to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (*Eph 4:13*).

The Sacrament of Reconciliation

86. Faithful to her ministry of reconciling humanity to God and each person to the other, the Church serves her sons and daughters by providing the Sacrament of Penance, Reconciliation and Forgiveness. Through the habitual practice of this sacrament, Christians bear witness to the fact that they are acquiring the skill of examining their actions in life and experiencing the mercy and the goodness of God^[46] in their state of sin, misery and lack of love.^[47] The practice of this sacrament has become a genuine place where the grace of God reconciles them to himself and others. They have progressively learned to enter into the logic of reconciliation (cf. *Mt 6:15; 18:23-35*). Cannot a form of communal celebration of the Sacrament, according to the norms of the Church, contribute to redressing the wounds of a society torn apart by violence, conflicts and wars?

III. TO ACT AS THE CHURCH-FAMILY OF GOD

1. Sons and Daughters of the One Father in the Only-Begotten Son

87. Belonging to Christ puts differences in origin aside and brings people together as brothers and sisters in one family of the sons and daughters of God. Since this is the case, Christ's disciples are called upon to transform their differences, based on tribes, ethnic groups, races or social class, which oftentimes impede a togetherness. In doing so, they will show that the bond created by the waters of Baptism is stronger than blood-ties (cf. *Gal 3:27-28*).

88. Because the image of the Church as Family is founded on the fatherhood of God, it highlights the African family-values of solidarity, sharing, respect for others, hospitality, togetherness, etc. This model has opened hearts and spirits in conflict-management by combining dialogue under the "palaver tree" and the rites of reconciliation, which are for

Christ's disciples the Word of God, heard and shared,^[48] the Sacrament of Penance and the Eucharist which seals communion. What has the Church learned from the experiences of diocesan synods, days of recollection for the clergy and forums for the lay faithful and Small Christian Communities?

2. Sign and Instrument of Reconciliation

89. The Church-Family becomes a visible sign and instrument of justice, peace and reconciliation, which is accomplished through Christ for the benefit of the human race, when it remains faithful to her identity as a family, "salt of the earth" and "light of the world".^[49] This was seen in the Servant of God, Pope John Paul II at Goree (Senegal) in 1992 and in Rome on the threshold of the Third Millennium. Following his example, the bishops of S.E.C.A.M. repeated his gesture at Gore in 2003.

The Church: Sacrament of Reconciliation

90. The Church on the African continent has taken a noteworthy part in the reconciliation process of conflicts. She also enjoys great credibility in many African societies. Is this not an invitation to become more courageously involved in building bridges between people? For example, in virtue of the power of the Holy Spirit, some ecclesial communities bear witness to their faith in Christ by having the courage to take initiatives for reconciliation among Small Christian Communities, separated couples, families in conflict and divided village communities.

Genuine Reconciliation: Healing for Justice and Peace

91. Just as a seed sown in the ground sprouts without being noticed, so too the Kingdom of God, whose sign and instrument is the Church. The efficacy of her activity is invisible to the human eye. The reconciliation which Christ continues to accomplish through her for the unity of the human race is a deliberate, enduring process of healing, which demands that all Christians work with the faith of Moses who "endured as seeing him who is invisible" (Heb 11:27). Healed through the anointing of the Spirit of Christ, the Church's members are able to make openings to repair relations between people and reestablish peace in people's hearts and in society.

IV. WORKING FOR A RECONCILED AFRICA

92. The responses have confirmed that the Church is deeply involved on the African continent in serving everyone through her educational and healthcare institutions and programmes for development. In what ways can Church institutions and communities (episcopal conferences, dioceses, parishes, Small Christian Communities) share in this witness?

1. The Church: Family for all Nations

93. Small Christian Communities incarnate in the Church the support which arises from the joy of belonging to a family. Since the Christian life is human life, by necessity it takes place in the context of a family. Acts of solidarity, an expression of Christian charity, are occurring in exemplary fashion in these communities. In some places, the Word of God is read, shared and lived at this level. The role of lay animators in these communities is particularly important in ensuring a leadership-service which assists members to grow in their faith and become involved in efforts for reconciliation and a more just and peaceful society. Undoubtedly, theological work needs to be done in this "area".

94. The Church models herself as a family. She must work so that the family as the "domestic

Church” might reflect the Holy Family, where total self-giving for each other is marked by respect, openness to others and collaboration (cf. [Mt 2:13-14, 19-23](#); [Lk 2:21ff](#); [Jn 2:1-12; 19:26-27](#); [Acts 1:14](#)). Couples and the family require particular attention. Traditional marriage sometimes obliges Christians to live on the periphery of Christian communities. What can be done so that the Christian celebration of marriage might be more grounded in the African tradition of a matrimonial covenant? How can this in turn be raised and transformed through Gospel values and Christian marriage?^[50] What can be done to reduce the oftentimes high cost of marriages in Church and to encourage the very poor to celebrate the Sacrament? By nature, the question of Christian couples affects the family. The complex character of regulating births requires the Church to offer the assistance of experts in dialogue with Christian couples, all the while respecting both African cultural values on life and the Church’s teaching on the moral law and using the best knowledge available in the medical field for “Natural Family Planning”.

95. With a decline in Christian practice, some Particular Churches are experiencing a weakening in the fabric of the ecclesial family for various reasons. The lack of a common programme slows the Church’s efforts for peace and the resolution of conflicts. Christians grow weak, because they do not have a sound grasp of their faith which enables them to live and “make a defence to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you” ([1 Pt 3:15](#)). Sacred Scripture, which ought to be an assistance, has not yet become a part of their lives as a source of understanding their journey with God in the midst of the world and through history. Sometimes, they have recourse to witchcraft and the lamentable practices mentioned above or allow themselves to be influenced by political ideologies and Christian sects which attack the Catholic Church. For a great number of Christians, the Church is identified with the hierarchy. They do not have at heart the idea of the Mystical Body with its many members. Undoubtedly, the lack of apostolic works in some Particular Churches and the economic problems which they encounter, hinder a willingness to undertake projects capable of creating in their members a sense that they are the Church. Moreover, the Church suffers from priests and women and men religious who sometimes give bad example in looking to occult practices—which can even occur at times of praying for healing and deliverance—and vying for social positions, instead of devoting themselves to serving the least of the brethren.

2. Service to Society: Health, Education and Socio-Economic Development

96. In some regions of the continent, already-insufficient health facilities are not only being destroyed by wars but also being rendered ineffective by a lack of trained personnel and corruption. Though sorely tested, expressions of Christian and African solidarity can still be found, especially in areas where the number of those sick with endemic diseases is very high. In other parts of the continent, health facilities are significantly present. They assist the ill, those wounded in battle and people with other needs. Some health-insurance programmes concretely express the Church’s determination to show solidarity. Because of the notable assistance of both *Caritas* and some Small Christian Communities, the poorest are cared for and those with AIDS receive attention. In certain Particular Churches, associations are instructing couples in family planning, using natural methods. The sacrifices and exemplary generosity of the personnel in healthcare institutions visibly shows the Church’s solicitude for the sick.

97. In the field of education, many Particular Churches have taken great pains to provide buildings and programmes. Managing them, however, is proving difficult because of the great number of young people who wish to take part and the lack of qualified personnel. For the want of places to spend leisure time and engage in games for recreation, young people fall in with bad company and are dragged into a life of drugs and violence. Moreover, they become victims of sexual abuse and other crimes, when not enrolling as soldiers in wars or being exploited for work in the fields or mines. The situation worsens when orphans are involved

or, generally speaking, when parental interest, control and guidance is lacking. Children also have rights.^[51] Working with and for the young is thinking of the future of society. Therefore, this task involves every Christian. Catholic schools are a source of concern. Without the benefit of State subsidies, they have difficulty maintaining themselves or do so at a high cost to the poor. Nevertheless, the development of Catholic universities on the African continent is noteworthy. This being said, the dedication to the task-at-hand and the attention given to pupils and students by those who work in the field of education is admirable and deserves encouragement by the whole Church.

98. Outside the specific areas of health and education, a great majority of Particular Churches are involved in different socio-economic areas of service to the poor, refugees, nomads and youth. They show particular concern for Catholics involved in a life of politics and the economy.

3. Ecumenical Dialogue

99. Through ordinary moments of encounter, e.g. The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and translating the Bible into local languages with the United Bible Societies, dialogue continues among Christians of all confessions in Africa. These efforts deserve encouragement.

100. The desire to engage in dialogue with the Church's Christian brothers and sisters increases, despite encountering some obstacles: differences in doctrinal vantage points; in principles of biblical hermeneutics and in the nature and mission of the Church; variance with the Church's moral teachings and discipline; and a lack of a common liturgical style. At the same time, there exists a certain distrust, a rivalry between groups of Christians and a fundamentalism, arising from certain complexes, which is expressed, among other things, in adopting Catholic ecclesiastical attire (clerical clothes, episcopal insignias and liturgical vestments). A lack of tolerance and mutual understanding as well as mutual accusations make meetings very difficult. In the society-at-large, the Catholic Church is an object of harsh aggression by Christian sects which are instrumentalized by politicians to undermine the values which the Church defends: the family, respect for the dignity and sacredness of human life, unity. Despite these challenges, dialogue must be advanced, especially in national and international meetings of the Council of Churches.

4. Relations with African Traditional Religion

101. The suggested pastoral approach with the followers of African Traditional Religion is an open-minded study of both this religion and its culture. Such a study can help identify the good and noble elements of each, which Christianity can adopt, while purifying those judged incompatible with the Gospel, so as to forge a culture of reconciliation, justice and peace. This approach will facilitate collaboration with the followers of African Traditional Religion and will contribute to an authentic inculturation in the Church.^[52] The distinction however must be made concerning the extreme followers of African Traditional Religion, who defend it as the national patrimony and make it an object of national pride, even though they often do not practice it.

5. Dialogue with Islam

102. In some places, living together with Muslim brothers and sisters is sound and good. In other places, however, mistrust on both sides hinders a peaceful dialogue, e.g., conflicts arising from mixed marriages. Intolerance of some Islamic groups sparks hostility and feeds prejudices. The matter is not helped by doctrinal positions espoused by certain proponents of *Jihad*. How can the Church's members work towards peace in a dialogue and process of reconciliation which the Christian faith teaches? The tendency to politicize religious

affiliation is, among others, a dangerous tendency seen at the outset of dialogue. Nevertheless, amidst the crisis, collaboration in some places in providing civic and electoral instruction is promising to be fruitful. Sometimes, Muslims have readily welcomed the documents of episcopal conferences. At the same time, the structures of the Church have sometimes served Muslim communities in the distribution of goods to the poor and needy. The solidarity of some Muslims with the Church is witnessed in their organizing meetings to reflect on various problems in society: living together in peace, corruption, poverty, etc. Respect for the religious identity of Muslim children in Catholic schools in Africa is an exemplary and effective way of educating tolerance and peace in society.

CHAPTER IV

THE CHURCH-FAMILY OF GOD AT WORK: WITNESS AND NEW PERSPECTIVES

103. Since the First Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops, the Particular Churches have been seeking to follow the directives and guidelines of *Ecclesia in Africa* and put into effect its recommendations, particularly in the matter of justice, peace and unity, according to the conception of the Church as Family of God. They expect the synod fathers to reflect anew on these subjects at the Second Special Assembly and to offer some observations so as to rally individuals, communities and institutions in their undertakings as well as to supply guidance in their search for paths to reconciliation, justice and peace.

I. THE WITNESS OF LIFE

104. In this regard, the most fitting response from Christ's disciples (bishops, priests, consecrated persons and the lay faithful) is to employ the arms of faith and seek a more profound conversion in their pursuit of holiness through: hearing the Word; frequenting the sacraments; participating in spiritual exercises; addressing the questions posed by one's neighbour, society and events; renewing efforts towards moral conversion; maintaining a consistency between one's actions and the Word which is proclaimed; exercising faithfully the responsibilities entrusted to each; undertaking works of penance, mercy and charity; becoming involved in society so as to counteract an earthly criteria; and following a simple life-style inspired by the Gospel. The core of evangelization is a personal encounter with Jesus in daily prayer, the sacraments and the spiritual life, fully convinced that "unless the Lord build the house, those who build it labour in vain (*Ps 127:1*).

105. Mary, Mother of the Word of God, is the model par excellence for the life of witness expected of Christ's disciples in Africa. In her, each Christian comes to know that an obedient hearing of the Word of God is incarnated in a life of service. In effect, her *fiat* will lead her to the foot of the Cross (cf. *Jn 19:25ff*). She gives birth to her son in poverty "because there was no room for them in the inn" (*Lk 2:7*). She had concern for her Son, who remained behind in the temple, and meditated on his words (cf. *Lk 2:41-52*). She had at heart the joy of the young couple at Cana and intervened with her Son on their behalf (cf. *Jn 2*). She was in the company of the disciples in the Cenacle as they awaited the Holy Spirit (cf. *Acts 1:14*). How can the Mother of Jesus assume her proper place in the lives of her sons and daughters, who are burdened and suffering, by inviting them to do whatever her Son tells them (cf. *Jn 2:5*) and guiding them anew in the joyous, sorrowful and glorious happenings of daily life?

II. AGENTS AND INSTITUTIONS

1. Agents

106. In the Church-Family of God, the members have the responsibility as individuals to fulfill their mission for the family's well-being and to act in a familial spirit, that is, with Christ's Spirit, to build a world according to God's plan. The example of many Pastors and lay faithful who have accepted martyrdom for their faith is an invitation to the whole Church in Africa to pursue with determination the path of holiness.

Bishops

107. United with the Bishop of Rome, the Universal Pastor of the Church, the voice of bishop-servants of the Word, raised and heard in times of social crisis is like that of a sentinel of a city.^[53] In facing political problems concerning constitutions, elections, injustices, violations of human rights, etc., a prophetic word from the bishop is a response to the people's thirst for justice and peace. The courage and boldness of bishops make them living examples of the "salt of the earth" and the "light of the world".

108. The activities of the African episcopate for a reconciled world are seen in writing pastoral letters, publishing magazines which spread a culture of peace and educating large numbers of Christians in the Church's social doctrine. The establishment and support of adequate structures and their involvement in ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, through a unity of hearts, contribute to forging a peaceful environment. In the gap separating leaders from citizens, the dialogue of bishops with political leaders and the information they transmit to Christians are openings towards bringing about peace.

109. In order to foster or reestablish justice and peace in the Church, some feel that bishops ought to appoint priests and religious using objective criteria and not ethnic ones. The Church-Family of God is called upon to establish meditation groups at various levels. Sometimes difficulties in dialogue exist between the bishop, his presbyterate or other groups of his people. In cases where this or that member is responsible and at fault, competent authority must restore trust and mend the fabric of the Church- Family.

110. The unity of bishops among themselves as a college is indispensable. Such a unity is built and consolidated through an affective and effective fellowship and the sharing of pastoral experiences. To achieve this unity, it is important to plan adequately, devise effective pastoral programmes, organize the necessary timetable and adopt a proper language.

Priests

111. In their role as knowledgeable, perceptive collaborators of bishops, priests^[54] share in the multi-faceted ministry of teaching, particularly through the Sunday homily, which they are conscientiously to prepare. At these times, they can help Christians heed their call to be workers of justice, peace and reconciliation. In the same way, administering the sacraments is also a place to instruct and form a Christian sensitivity to these same values, in light of which the Church's members are asked to examine their progress in following Christ.

112. In their daily lives, priests have the opportunity to meet the faithful in various groups (pastoral councils, etc.). These points of contact can be for priests an occasion to initiate, guide and direct the faithful in examining their lives in light of the Gospel so they can live authentically Christian lives. Priests ought to make generous use of these unique moments to enkindle a spirit of love, truth, justice and peace in exhorting the faithful, in arbitrating conflicts in marriage and family, in assisting the marginalized and abandoned and in implementing Church programmes.

Consecrated Persons

113. The institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life^[55] have witnessed a pronounced growth in vocations, which is a sign of the Church's dynamism in Africa.^[56] Some responses see this as a source of "spiritual energy" nourishing the Church. Through their proper charisms and specific involvement in the Church, these institutes and societies work to extend the Kingdom of Christ's justice, peace and love through pastoral work with youth (schools, street ministry, etc.), assistance to the poor, services to women (particularly widows) and care of the sick and physically challenged. On their part, the collaboration of consecrated persons with the local ordinary would contribute in a visible way to manifesting the communion of the Church-Family, which seeks to be a prophetic sign in Africa in the heart of divided societies.

114. Consecrated women, in modelling their lives and work in community after Mary, the Mother of God, contribute to an increasing manifestation of the characteristics of God through their feminine "genius" of gentleness, tenderness and openness to hearing the Word like Mary, the sister of Lazarus (cf. *Jn 11*) and the Samaritan women (cf. *Jn 4*), or of service to others, like Martha (cf. *Lk 8*; *Jn 11*). Responding to the challenges of reconciliation, justice and peace through their nearness to others seems to be a way of better highlighting women's gifts. It is also, and in great part, by and with women as prime collaborators in the Church's evangelizing mission, that new responses must be sought to the suffering taking place in African societies.

The Lay Faithful in the Church

115. Generally speaking, the Christian's involvement in society, which is inspired by Gospel values, adds a particular taste to life. Many lay Christians, individually or in associations (women, young people, professionals, etc.), have proven their courage in holding the torch of faith high in places where justice and peace are scorned. They have shown themselves to be authentic agents of reconciliation, particularly those in Catholic Action and apostolic or spiritual associations of the faithful.

116. Catechists are heralds of the Gospel who continue to be valuable animators of Christian communities.^[57] They will make a better contribution, if they are given a sound scriptural and doctrinal formation as well as just compensation, so that they can care for their families in a dignified way and provide a proper education for their children.

117. The witness of many Christians in situations of conflict well illustrates that the feminine "genius", used according to the Spirit of Christ, helps generate a culture of peace and not violence, life and not death, humaneness and not brutality. The role of women will be more effective, if the Church-Family enlists them in her mission in a more visible, straightforward manner. In this way, they can give a more humane tone to African societies.

118. Men ought to work as husbands, fathers and heads of families to maintain family unity by fostering peace and just relations and by a harmonious rapport with other families in Small Christian Communities and by being themselves workers of reconciliation, justice and peace in the different associations and movements of the lay faithful to which they belong.

2. Church Structures and Institutions

119. In addition to the good example of individual Christians, the Church's institutions must bear the mark of the spirit of the Gospel whose fruits, as stated by St. Paul, are "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law" (*Gal 5:22-23*).

Episcopal Conferences

120. The pastoral letters of episcopal conferences, written to denounce all that oppresses men and women in society, bear testimony to the Church-Family's concern for unity. The work of Justice and Peace Commissions and other ecclesial institutions provide valuable support in these areas of justice, peace and reconciliation. Their pastoral attention for the lay faithful involved in public and private services and different professions by assigning chaplains are particularly positive signs that the "joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, ... are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts."^[58]

The Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar

121. Visits by bishops or those by Catholic Christians from other continents to exchange experiences on peace through partnerships and Church assistance as well as technical and financial support, show the dynamism of the Particular Churches and sends a strong message to all Christians of the solidarity of the universal Church. A prime example is the relationship of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (S.E.C.A.M) with the episcopal conferences of Asia and Europe, something which should be encouraged. Meetings of episcopal conferences have also been held on the national and regional levels.

122. The development of lay partnerships among the Churches of different continents would favour an exchange of experts in different fields related to justice and peace and could enable them to collaborate in the cause of justice and peace at international events in the name of their shared faith in Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

Justice and Peace Commissions

123. At all levels of planning in the Particular Churches in Africa, justice and peace commissions have sought to stir and form the consciences of the faithful so that they might become the salt of the earth and the light of the world. In this manner, the faithful are formed to respect the rights of citizens and to fight against impunity of actions, war crimes, crimes against humanity, the undignified treatment of prisoners, etc. At election time, some justice and peace commissions have proposed programmes of civic and electoral instruction. Some shortfalls in society as well as those in the Church have been remedied due to their intervention. In Particular Churches without justice and peace commissions, *Caritas* and other institutions accomplish the same task.

124. As for their activities, the afore-mentioned bodies have been active in their pursuit of justice by caring for victims of violence of every kind, especially women and children. In some countries, they have exercised the role of observers during elections.

125. Some responses to the *Lineamenta* consider that justice and peace commissions would greater and more effectively fulfill their mission, if their mission were better understood. It is felt that these commissions are often seen as instruments to encourage the laity to fight for justice and not as a true tool of evangelization working for reconciliation, justice and peace. How can justice and peace commissions be better understood?

Major Seminaries and Houses of Religious Formation

126. If those serving the Church-Family are to be guides and models of Christian communities, peace makers, reconcilers and just persons, greater discernment is needed in the choice of future priests^[59] and consecrated persons, not to mention a greater care in providing them with sound formation programmes. Moreover, their formation must take into consideration the real challenges of Christian communities, where persons of different ethnicities, tribes, races and social origin are called to live together by sharing the same faith

in Christ. To do this, engaging lay men and women in priestly formation would contribute to making future priests more balanced and mature.

127. The formation of consecrated women, who are able to wholeheartedly collaborate in the vineyard of the Lord, requires that their programme of formation be re-evaluated to require both the philosophical and theological disciplines. The value and efficacy of the Church's teaching on working with women can be seen in how consecrated women collaborate in pastoral programmes.

Formation Programmes

128. Particular Churches have met social challenges by proposing formation programmes which incorporate the Church's social teaching^[60] and have as their purpose the promotion of a more just, fraternal and prosperous society. Formation in such areas as rights, customs, peace and development, civic and electoral instruction, reconciliation and good governance, literacy, the prevention of illnesses and promotion of moral social behaviour (in the case of HIV/AIDS, for example) and many other subjects have been aimed at preparing the sons and daughters of the countries of Africa to become totally involved and responsible in public affairs. Equal efforts should be undertaken to associate pastoral workers in these programmes so that they can participate more effectively in building a culture of reconciliation, justice and peace.

129. Learning how to mend the fabric of social relations comes from an in-depth process of reconciliation (conflict management) with a particular emphasis on justice, a condition for true peace. In this way, citizens, both Christians and non-Christians alike, learn how to participate in the decisions taken by their leaders, which will affect their lives, by checking the work of elected officials and by being involved in the management of the riches of their country. Above all, particular care is to be given to the formation of conscience, especially in young people, who are the future of African societies.

130. Some difficulties can be seen in the diffusion of such programmes and their follow-up at the grass-roots level. Can a way be found in dioceses, parishes and Small Christian Communities to make the implementation of such programmes possible?

Health Institutions

131. Qualified and competent persons, duly chosen on this basis, will be true servants of peace in heart and body, capable of meeting today's challenges. High-calibre service, accessible to all, regardless of race, tribe, religion or ethnic origin, contributes to making the Catholic Church a worker of peace in African countries.

132. Through good planning in employing personnel and maintaining materials and through establishing institutions of special care, with the possibility of high-quality medical treatment, the Church's health institutions will be able to contribute to the building of a society which respects the dignity of human life from the moment of conception to natural death. In this regard, the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI lamented, "How can we not be alarmed ... by the continuous attacks on life, from conception to natural death?" With these words he voiced his surprise at seeing in some places, such as Africa, with a cultural tradition of respecting life, an attempt to trivialize abortion through the Maputo Protocol.^[61]

Educational Institutions

133. The Church's involvement in education is a major part of her universal evangelizing mission of salvation. Her goal is preparing for tomorrow a healthy, peaceful and responsible society. In the regions or countries where Church institutions have been confiscated by the

State, efforts are underway for their restitution, so they can again be placed at the service of people.

134. For educational services to improve, greater attentions needs to be given: to bettering the conditions of teachers and their competency; to offer, in dialogue with the State, a scholastic formation open to everyone; to include parents in educating young people through associations and seminars on education; to propose a programme of comprehensive education (intellectual, moral, spiritual, human and professional); to encourage tutorial instruction and student-exchange programmes; to recognize the merits of educators; and to take initiatives for self-financing. Here lie important paths for a future of peace and well-being.

Universities

135. Universities ought to fulfill their vocation of *universitas* by being examples of the integrating force which brings about a unity in diversity (*unitas in diversis*) and by academic research at the highest level, where the sciences are in dialogue with the Word of God, the source of an authentic peace for those in love with truth, both human truth (of the individual and societies) and divine truth. This results from being faithful to their Catholic identity, which can be helped by offering to all students an introductory programme in Catholic theology. In this way, Catholic universities will show themselves to be promoters of a genuine openness to all that is universal, which ensures that they won't be withdrawn in their own identity.

136. Africa's universities and academic institutions can make an effective, workable response to the challenges of reconciliation, justice and peace by proposing what is taught on the fundamental rights of the human person, introducing the general public to a sense of the laws of their country, holding conferences to discuss the questions of corruption, poverty and injustice and undertaking serious studies on the culture of justice and peace in urban and rural settings, so as, in turn, to transform them.

3. The Christian Faithful in Society

137. The Church acts in society as a community through her members, notably through the lay faithful. The trust acquired by the Church in society is the fruit of the action of the Holy Spirit who propels the faith of Christians towards Christ and sustains their involvement. After the example of the Holy Family of Nazareth, the Christian family,^[62] by encompassing such family values as love, togetherness, compassion, mercy, openness to other families (cf. [Lk 2:44](#)) and being sufficiently secure in its finances, becomes a place of serene living, peace and a harmony which is contagious. Since the family is the cell of society, they should be promoted so as to have a greater impact on the Church and society. Christians live their faith in a selfless manner by aiding the poor, the marginalized and the vulnerable, actively participating in resolving social problems and decisively seeking unity. This depends on the laity, who are full-fledged messengers of the Gospel. In this manner, the Church's effective presence in secular institutions is ensured.

In Politics

138. As lights of the world, Catholics live according to the spirit of the Gospel. These women and men, seized with a spirit of service, a concern for the common good and a respect for human rights, selflessly and courageously take up the cause against dictatorship and corruption and work for a sound and honest management of all natural and human resources. They sacrifice themselves to build and strengthen the principles of democracy so that the rule-of-law may govern the State. The Christian witness of men and women, who give credibility to political activity, will forge a culture of life, peace and justice in African

societies. A greater presence of Catholic women and men in leadership positions, who bear witness to the values of credibility, responsibility, justice, probity, etc., will give added flavour to African political life.

In the Armed Forces

139. Men and women in the armed forces have seen members of the Church within their ranks, companions-in-arms who are shining examples of patriotism in their respect for the military code of ethics, goods and persons. They protect the most vulnerable in times of conflict and war and show themselves ever ready to defend the territorial integrity of their countries. Such values should be incarnated in all Christians enrolled in the armies of Africa, so that the armed forces might be instruments of justice and peace. In this regard, Christians, who are knowledgeable and well aware of the danger of arms, ought to raise their voices against the selling of arms in zones of conflict, advocate a restoration of the rule-of-law and not arms, oppose the enlistment of children in armies and obey God rather than men (cf. [Acts 5:29](#)).

In the Economy

140. Encouragement and support should be given to the many Catholic women and men who, for their faith, create or manage private or public enterprises in an effective, edifying manner. They live off their work, produce riches, pay fees and taxes to the State Treasury, provide a just wage, fight against the waste of natural resources, regulate the import/export trade, etc. These forces in life ought to grow stronger, because their transforming effects will help check the advance of poverty and misery. Furthermore, these model Christian men and women ought to serve as mediators between populations which are powerless and the international structures of commerce (e.g., World Trade Organization), financiers who are able to extend credit, etc. In doing so, they will help improve the working conditions of the most vulnerable, protect the production process and facilitate the sale of their products at just prices.

In Education

141. In some regions of the African continent, young Catholics ^[63] are actively engaged in propagating Gospel values. They are sharing what they have received themselves in their education on how to live and love as Christians. Consequently, all Christian adults have the task of transmitting to young people the values of discipleship in Christ so that, in turn, they might become salt and light. This will be more effectively done, if young people are in contact with authentic leaders who incarnate in their lives the values they teach young people, such as, effort and diligence in their work. In this way, these leaders set a true example for the young of words in action.

In Health

142. In the course of their formation, health workers swear the Hippocratic oath to protect life. Some Catholic women and men in the medical corps in Africa have given themselves to this work with competence, courage and even heroism in protecting life from the moment of conception (in refusing to perform abortions) to its natural end (in refusing to take part in euthanasia), in dedicated assistance to the victims of HIV/AIDS, etc. Such actions should be made known and proposed as models. Furthermore, some health infrastructures, which are promoters of the spirit of the Gospel, should make medical care readily accessible to the most needy. If faithful Catholics involved in healthcare work towards improving hygiene and the health of the most abandoned on the periphery of society, they will help diminish the pockets of rebellion and aggression which are defiling society and compromising peace.

In Cultural Settings

conflict and division, we know it is (God) who turns our minds to thoughts of peace,” people make an offering of their suffering and activity so that “those who were estranged join hands in friendship, and nations seek the way of peace together”^[66] (cf. 2 Cor 5:18). Building the civilization of love is everyone’s responsibility.

148. The Church-Family of God in Africa, faithful to her vocation to announce the Good News of the Gospel, desires to open herself more and more to the mission *ad intra* on the continent itself and *ad extra* towards the Churches of other continents in contact with her.^[67] So that this openness can be a “witness ... to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8), Christians and Christian communities on the continent wish equally to open their hearts to immigrants from other countries and continents. In their work, the force of the Gospel will provide energy for the Church-Family of God in service to reconciliation, justice and peace.

149. With Mary, the Church in Africa is open to the action of the Holy Spirit so that, in and through her members on the continent, the face of the earth might be renewed:

Holy Mary,
Mother of God, Protectress of Africa,
You have given to the world the true Light, Jesus Christ.

Through your obedience to the Father and the grace of the Holy Spirit
You have given us the source of our reconciliation and our justice,
Jesus Christ, our peace and our joy.

Mother of Tenderness and Wisdom,
Show us Jesus, your Son and the Son of God
Guide our path of conversion
So that Jesus might shine his glory on us
In every aspect of our personal, familial and social lives.

Mother, full of Mercy and Justice,
Through your docility to the Spirit, the Counselor,
Obtain for us the grace to be witnesses of the Risen Lord,
So that we will increasingly become
The salt of the earth and the light of the world.

Mother of Perpetual Help,
We entrust to your maternal intercession
the preparation and fruits of the Second Special Assembly for Africa.

Queen of Peace, pray for us!

Our Lady of Africa, pray for us!

^[1] Cf. ST. CYPRIAN, *De Catholicae Ecclesiae unitate*: SC 500, Éditions du Cerf, Paris, 2006.

^[2] Though names may vary, the reality is the same: *Communauté Ecclèsiale Vivante* (CEV);

Small Christian Community (SCC).

[3] Cf. SECOND SPECIAL ASSEMBLY FOR AFRICA OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS, *Lineamenta*, Preface of Most Rev. Nikola Eterovic, Vatican City, 2006.

[4] Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, 2: AAS 77 (1985) 186-188.

[5] Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, 113-114; 120: AAS 88 (1996) 66-68; 71.

[6] Cf. BENEDICT XVI, *Angelus (22.02.2009): L'Osservatore Romano: Weekly Edition in English*, 25.02.2009, p. 1; ST. IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH, *ad Romanos*, Pref.: FUNK F., *Opera Patrum Apostolorum*, Vol. I, Tubingae, 1897, p. 124; SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Lumen gentium*, 13.

[7] Cf. *ibidem*, 105-139 *et passim*: AAS 88 (1996) 63-80.

[8] Cf. *ibidem*, 108: AAS 88 (1996) 65.

[9] SECOND SPECIAL ASSEMBLY FOR AFRICA OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS, *Lineamenta*, 1, Vatican City, 2006, p. 1.

[10] Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, 70: AAS 88 (1996) 45.

[11] Cf. *ibidem*, 106: AAS 88 (1996) 64.

[12] Cf. *ibidem*, 58: AAS 88 (1996) 37.

[13] Cf. *ibidem*, 89: AAS 88 (1996) 56.

[14] Cf. ASSOCIATION OF MEMBER EPISCOPAL CONFERENCES IN EASTERN AFRICA (A.M.E.C.E.A.)-INTER-REGIONAL MEETING OF BISHOPS OF SOUTHERN AFRICA (I.M.B.I.S.A.), Message *The Role of the Church in Development in the Light of the African Synod* (20.08.1995), §6.

[15] Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, 80: AAS 88 (1996) 52.

[16] Cf. *ibidem*, 115: AAS 88 (1996) 68-69.

[17] Cf. *ibidem*, 17, 70: AAS 88 (1996) 13; 45.

[18] Cf. *ibidem*, 68: AAS 88 (1996) 42-44.

[19] Cf. *ibidem*, 106: AAS 88 (1996) 64.

[20] Cf. *ibidem*, 71, 124: *AAS* 88 (1996) 46; 72-73.

[21] Cf. *ibidem*, 109: *AAS* 88 (1996) 65.

[22] Cf. *ibidem*, 116: *AAS* 88 (1996) 69.

[23] Cf. *ibidem*, 104: *AAS* 88 (1996) 63.

[24] SYMPOSIUM OF EPISCOPAL CONFERENCES OF AFRICA AND MADAGASCAR, *Acts of the Seventh Plenary Assembly* (Kinshasa, 1984), 167.

[25] PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE PASTORAL CARE OF MIGRANTS AND ITINERANT PEOPLE, *Instruction Erga migrantes caritas Christi* (03.05.2004), 10: *AAS* 96 (2004) 767-768.

[26] Cf. SECOND SPECIAL ASSEMBLY FOR AFRICA OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS, *Lineamenta*, 20, Vatican City, 2006, p. 13-14.

[27] Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes*, 78; PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 134.

[28] PAUL VI, *Message for the World Day of Peace: "If You Want Peace, Work for Justice"* (08.12.1971): *AAS* 63 (1971) 868.

[29] JOHN PAUL II, *Message for the World Day of Peace: "No Peace Without Justice, No Justice Without Forgiveness"* (08.12.2001): *AAS* 94 (2002) 132-140.

[30] BENEDICT XVI, *Message to the Bishops of Mali on their Ad Limina Visit* (18.05.2007): *L'Osservatore Romano: Weekly Edition in English*, 30.05.2007, p. 4.

[31] Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, 113: *AAS* 88 (1996) 66-67.

[32] PAUL VI, Apostolic Letter *Octogesima adveniens* (14.05.1971), 17: *AAS* 63 (1971) 414.

[33] BENEDICT XVI, *Message for the World Day of Peace: "The Human Family: Community of Peace"* (08.12.2007), 14: *L'Osservatore Romano, Weekly Edition in English*, 19-26.12.2007, pp. 8-9.

[34] *Ibidem*, 3: *L'Osservatore Romano: Weekly Edition in English*, 19-26.12.2007, p. 8.

[35] JOHN PAUL II, *Message for the World Day of Peace: "No Peace Without Justice, No Justice Without Forgiveness"* (08.12.2001), 14: *AAS* 94 (2002) 139.

[36] *Ibidem*, 15: *AAS* 94 (2002) 139.

[37] *Ibidem*, 3; *AAS* 94 (2002) 133.

- [38] Cf. BENEDICT XVI, *Message for the World Day of Peace: "The Human Family: Community of Peace"* (08.12.2007), 10; *L'Osservatore Romano: Weekly Edition in English* 19-26.12.2007, p. 9.
- [39] Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, 48; *AAS* 88 (1996) 31.
- [40] Cf. *ibidem*, 47; *AAS* 88 (1996) 30.
- [41] XII ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS (2008), *Verbum Domini in vita et missione Ecclesiae*, *Message*, 15.
- [42] JOHN PAUL II, *Apostolic Visit to Africa, Discourse to the Bishops of Kenya* (07.05.1980), 6; *AAS* 72 (1980) 497; *L'Osservatore Romano: Weekly Edition in English*, 02.06.1980, p. 3.
- [43] Cf. XII ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS (2008), *Verbum Domini in vita et missione Ecclesiae*, *Message*, 10; SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, 21.
- [44] ST. IRENAEUS, *Adv. Hereses*, IV, 20, 7: *SC* 100, 648.
- [45] Cf. BENEDICT XVI, *Letter to the Participants at the General Assembly of the Catholic Biblical Federation* (12.06.2008); *L'Osservatore Romano: Weekly Edition in English*, 09.07.2008, p. 5.
- [46] Cf. ST. AUGUSTINE, *Confessionum libri tredecim.*, Liber 10, Cap. 33, 50: *PL* 32, 800.
- [47] Cf. ST. AUGUSTINE, *Sermo LVI*, 7, 11: *PL* 38, 381-382.
- [48] The method of *Lectio divina* devised at the Institute of Lumko (South Africa), called *Seven Steps*, has been adopted in a number of countries.
- [49] Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, 8-9; *AAS* 77 (1985) 200-204.
- [50] Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, 50; *AAS* 88 (1996) 31-32.
- [51] Cf. UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATION, *Convention on the Rights of a Child* (20.11.1989).
- [52] Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, 78; *AAS* 88 (1996) 56.
- [53] Cf. *ibidem*, 98; *AAS* 88 (1996) 61.
- [54] Cf. *ibidem*, 97 and 96 (deacons); *AAS* 88 (1996) 60.

[55] Cf. *ibidem*, 94: *AAS* 88 (1996) 58-99599.

[56] Cf. SECRETERIA STATUS RATIONARIUM GENERALE ECCLESIAE, *Annuarium statisticum Ecclesiae* 2006, Vatican City, p. 43.

[57] Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, 9: *AAS* 88 (1996) 57.

[58] SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes*, 1.

[59] Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, 95: *AAS* 88 (1996) 59-60.

[60] Cf. PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*.

[61] BENEDICT XVI, *Address to the Diplomatic Corps (08.01.2007): L'Osservatore Romano: Weekly Edition in English*, 17.01.2007, p. 3.

[62] Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, 92: *AAS* 88 (1996) 57-58.

[63] Cf. *ibidem*, 93: *AAS* 88 (1996) 58.

[64] Cf. PONTIFICAL COUNCIL OF JUSTICE AND PEACE, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 171-175.

[65] BENEDICT XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus caritas est* (25.12.2005), 19: *AAS* 98 (2006) 233.

[66] Preface of the Eucharistic Prayer for Reconciliation.

[67] Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, 130; 134-135: *AAS* 88 (1996) 75; 77; SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree on the Mission Activity of the Church *Ad gentes*, 20.

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