



VATICAN - During Benedict XVI's meeting with the clergy of Belluno-Feltre and Treviso, with regard to the 50th anniversary of the Fidei donum encyclical, the Pope said "Reciprocity is always very important and precisely the experience that we are Church sent to the world and we all know and love one another is most necessary and is also the power behind our proclamation"

Auronzo di Cadore (Agenzia Fides) - In the morning of Tuesday 24 July Pope Benedict XVI went to the church of Santa Giustina Martire ad Auronzo in Cadore, to address the clergy of Belluno-Feltre and Treviso, accompanied by the respective bishops. After a moment of prayer the Pope replied to ten questions posed by ten of the priests present on a variety of pastoral issues: formation of the consciences of the younger generations, the priorities of the priestly ministry, evangelisation of non Christian immigrants, the situation of divorced Catholics who re-marry or live together, how to help young people appreciate the value of life, how to bring God to the world of today, the pastoral needs determined by a shortage of priests, the great legacy of the Second Vatican Council.

One priest, recalling the 50th anniversary of the Fidei donum encyclical, posed the following question.

Question: Your Holiness my name is Fr Saverio and so my question is about missionary activity. This year is the 50th anniversary of the Encyclical Fidei donum. Taking up the call of the Pope many priests in our dioceses including myself have lived or are living an experience of mission ad gentes. A marvellous experience and in my humble opinion it could be lived by many priests in the vision of sharing among sister Churches. Given the shortage of priests in our countries, is the Encyclical still relevant today and with what spirit should it be taken up and lived by the priests who are sent and by the sending diocese? Thank you.

The Pope's answer: Thank you. First of all I would like to thank all fidei donum priests and their dioceses. Now, as I have said on other occasions, I receive many Bishops on ad limina visits from Asia, Africa and Latin America and they all say: "We have such great need of fidei donum priests and we are so grateful for what they do, making present often in very difficult situations the Catholicity of the Church, the visibility of the fact that we are one great universal communion, and a love of the distant neighbour who has come close in the situation of the fidei donum priest. This great gift which has been given in these 50 years I have seen and heard in all my conversations with priests who say "do not think we Africans are now self-supporting; we still need the visibility of the great communion of the universal Church".

I would say that we all need this visibility of being Catholics, of a love of neighbour which comes from afar to reaches the neighbour. Today the situation has changed, in the sense that in Europe too we receive priests from Africa and Latin America and even other parts of Europe itself and this allows us to see the beauty of this sharing of gifts, this giving to one another, because we all need each other: this is how the Body of Christ grows. To put it briefly I would say that this gift was and is a great gift which the Church acknowledges as such: in many situations which I cannot describe here in which there are social problems, problems of development, announcement of the faith, problems of isolation, need of the presence of others, these priests are a gift in whom the dioceses and the particular Churches recognise the presence of Christ who gives Himself for us and at the same time they realise that eucharistic Communion is not only supernatural communion it becomes concrete communion in this act of giving by diocesan priests present in other dioceses and that the Particular Church, becomes truly a network of love.

I thank all those who offer this gift. I warmly encourage bishops and priest to continue to offer this gift. I am aware that today with the shortage of vocations in Europe this gift is ever more difficult to offer; but we have the experience of other continents, such as India and Africa especially, offering us their priests. Reciprocity is always very important and precisely the experience that we are Church sent to the world and we all know and love one

another is most necessary and is also the power behind our proclamation. It renders visible the mustard seed which bears fruit and again and again grows into a great tree in which the birds of the sky find rest. Thank you and take courage. (S.L.) (Agenzia Fides 26/7/2007; righe 51, parole 726)

> *LINKS*

See the other questions and answers in Italian: <http://www.evangelizatio.org/portale/adgentes/pontefici/pontefice.php?id=842>: