



AFRICA/D. R. CONGO - In Brussels "Sister Churches" of Congo and Belgium celebrate Congo's 50 years of independence

Kinshasa (Agenzia Fides)- "Filled with deep gratitude we remember that the Church-Family-of-God in the Democratic Republic of Congo is the fruit of the apostolic zeal of missionaries, men and women, who came mostly from Belgium, and went to the four corners of our vast nation". With these words in his homily during Mass to celebrate with the participation of the Catholic Church in Belgium the 50th anniversary of Congo's independence, Bishop Nicolas Djomo of Tshumbe and President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Congo (CENCO) paid homage to the work of Belgian missionaries. The Mass was celebrated on Sunday 13 June in Brussels at the Cathedral of Saints Michel et Gudule".

Bishop Djomo pointed out that this year marks not only 50 years since independence but also 50 years since the establishment of the local hierarchy, and he recalled the strong ties between the two local Churches, of Congo and Belgium.

The President of CENCO had special words of praise for the first missionaries who "braved harsh social and climatic conditions and indeed many paid with their lives, as they toiled to build up local Churches which bring together men and women of every tribe, tongue and race in the name of Jesus Christ".

The missionaries, Bishop Djomo continued, "knew how to combine the proclamation of the Good News with the promotion of human development. Catholic missions opened all over the country became centres of development with poultry farms, medical clinics, schools and other essential social services".

"Thanks to the Church and to the support of the Belgian Bishops the Congolese were given access to higher education and university studies. And also thanks to the generosity of our Sister Church of Belgium, the Belgian people and other charitable peoples" said the President of the Bishops' Conference CENCO.

"The Catholic Church in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which has inherited missionary zeal, loves Congo and continues her service to assure every individual integral development. Far from allowing herself to give way to despair or pessimism, the Church in Congo with total trust in the Lord, pursues her mission of evangelisation and promotion of the human person" Bishop Djomo concluded. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 16/6/2010)