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AFRICA/ANGOLA - Missionaries' efforts to eradicate superstition of witchcraft, where first victims are children

Luanda (Agenzia Fides) – There is growing concern in the Catholic Church in Angola for the phenomenon of witchcraft.
"Witchcraft is the new war that makes pastoral activity very difficult," Radio Ecclesia was told by Fr. Estêvão Mukinda, a Spiritan missionary working in Andulo. "There is a certain reluctance among the people to get used to coexistence and the spirit of reconciliation, justice, and peace."
Fr. Mukinda is working in a difficult situation, as the mission of Andulo, founded 40 years ago, was closed for 30 years and was reopened six years ago, entrusted to the Spiritan missionaries.
"Recovering people's consciences does not happen overnight. It takes a long time," concludes Fr. Mukinda.
The Church is also committed to providing assistance to the primary victims of these beliefs: children accused of being witches. The Salesian Sisters of Sanza-Pombo, for example, have welcomed 59 children accused of witchcraft. "Our mission is to help children in need, especially orphans and those accused of witchcraft," says Rosalie Escoisato.
Thousands of Angolans “are living in fear of spirits, of malign and threatening powers. In their bewilderment they end up even condemning street children and the elderly as alleged sorcerers,” said Pope Benedict XVI on March 21, 2009, during his visit to Angola, at the celebration held in the Church of São Paulo in Luanda. (L.M.)
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