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Missionary Prayer Intention - MISSIONARY INTENTION-"That the risen Christ may be a sign of certain hope for the men and women of the African continent" - Comment on the Missionary Intention for April 2012

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - Africa is "a continent of hope" par excellence. But like all human realities, it is not able to find the basis of its hope in itself. If it is true that the African Church is full of youth and vitality, it is also true that the African society has suffered terribly in recent decades due to the fratricidal struggles between various ethnic groups. Like the rest of the world, Africa still needs the salvation of Jesus Christ, He who is our only peace and our hope, the only source of true reconciliation.

It is necessary that the wounds caused by these wars are healed by divine grace, with the forgiveness offered and received sincerely. Like the Good Samaritan, the Lord offers man the perfumed oil of His Holy Spirit to heal the wounds caused by division, hatred and violence. In the hearts healed by Christ, the humble Doctor made flesh for us, will sprout again, a real hope, not only based on human words, but on the strength and promise of the Lord. Those who accept the Word of Christ and the peace that flows from his Paschal Mystery, will be for others a source of peace and agents of reconciliation. Pope Benedict XVI said: "In the Lord Jesus there is neither Jew nor Gentile, there is not male or female (cf. Gal 3:28). In his flesh He has reconciled all peoples. With the power of the Holy Spirit I appeal to everyone: "Be reconciled to God" (2 Cor 5.20). No ethnic or cultural differences, race, gender or religion must become a source of contention between you. You are all children of God, our Father in heaven. With this conviction it will finally be possible to build a more just and peaceful Africa, worthy of the legitimate expectations of all its children". (Meeting with the Special Council for Synod of Africa, Yaounde, Cameroon, March 19, 2009).

In these days when we celebrate "the mysteries that have given us a new life," we must fix our gaze on the Crucifix: He abolished by his death our condemnation. He is the Good Shepherd, was put on the cross, collects the scattered children. The cross is therefore a source of reconciliation and unity.

The hope of Africa is not primarily in economic development. We see that the developed West is suffering a crisis of tremendous hope. Only God can provide a foundation for hope. In his encyclical Spe Salvi, Pope Benedict XVI says: "In this sense it is true that anyone who does not know God, even though he may entertain all kinds of hopes, is ultimately without hope, without the great hope that sustains the whole of life. Man’s great true hope, which holds firm in spite of all disappointments can only be God - God who has loved us and who continues to love us "to the end" "until all is accomplished". Whoever is moved by love begins to perceive what "life" really is".(Spe Salvi, n. 27).

The Paschal Mystery of Christ, his death and resurrection, are proof of God's love for man, love in its most radical form. This knowing we are loved makes "a hope that never disappoints" possible. Africa, which was sanctified by the physical presence of the Lord during his escape to Egypt, will be able to find in the Risen One the reason and cause of all its hopes. (Agenzia Fides 30/3/2012)

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