



## **EUROPE/GERMANY - "I will not leave you nor forsake you" Tragedy of HIV/AIDS in east Africa Pontifical Mission Societies October mission aid focus**

Aachen (Agenzia Fides) - For Catholics all over the world the month of October is dedicated to remembering missionaries and putting into practice the reciprocal responsibility of every local Church to support missionary work in order to obey Jesus' command to proclaim the Gospel to the whole world. "I will not leave you nor forsake you (Jn 1,5)" is the motto chosen by mission, Pontifical Mission Societies Germany, for its October 2006 campaign of awareness building and special collections focussed on the tragedy caused by HIV/Aids in East Africa where there are already millions of AIDS orphans and AIDS kills about 8,000 people every day. With regard to HIV/AIDS Africa is the worst hit continent in the world.

During the month of October guests from east Africa will visit German dioceses to speak about the situation in their respective countries and take part in mission initiatives and celebrations, as representatives of the universal Church. These specially invited guests include Archbishop Paul K. Bakyenga of Mbarara, Uganda, president of AMECEA Association of East African Bishops' Conferences, numerous bishops from other E. African countries, men and women Religious and lay Catholics involved in the fight against HIV/AIDS in that region. The October Mission Campaign includes also initiatives involving children and young people. Information and material is available at the missio website.

In a joint appeal to be read after Masses on Sunday 15th October, the Catholic Bishops of Germany recall Mission Sunday celebrated on 22 October by the Church all over the world and that an act of solidarity towards those who suffer renders visible the God in whom we believe, God is love, to whom Pope Benedict XVI dedicated his first encyclical Deus Caritas Est. "A missionary Church is a community which heals", the bishops write. Urging Catholics to pray and provide material support for the work of the Pontifical Mission Societies the Bishops say: "Let us give to others, giving them reason to thank God for their life and their health!".

"We are convinced that the handing on of the faith is an important contribution in the fight against HIV/AIDS" writes national director of missio Aachen Fr. Hermann Schalück in his presentation of the campaign recalling the words of Pope Benedict

XVI during his recent visit to Germany: "...evangelization itself should be foremost, ... if - for example - AIDS is to be combated by realistically facing its deeper causes and the sick are to be given the loving care they need. Social issues and the Gospel are inseparable" (Homily during Mass in Munich, 10 September 2006). "A missionary Church has the duty to care for and support people with AIDS and people who assist them so they may experience God's presence and promise 'I will not leave you nor forsake you'", the national director of the Pontifical Mission Societies Aachen concluded. (MS) (Agenzia Fides 6/10/2006 - 39 righe, 513 parole)

> **LINKS**

More information: [www.missio.de](http://www.missio.de):