agenzia fides
Fondata nel 1927
Organo di informazione delle Pontificie Opere Missionarie
http://www.fides.org

VATICAN - The Pope addresses Superior Council of the Pontifical Mission Societies and participants at Congress of Fidei donum Missionaries: "Although many are the challenges to evangelisation in our day, many too are the signs of hope which testify all over the world to encouraging missionary vitality among the Christian people "

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - "Especially to Africa… Pius XII was looking when, with prophetic intuition, he thought of that new missionary "agent", named after the first words of his encyclical Fidei donum. He wished to encourage, besides traditional forms, a new form of missionary co-operation between 'old' Christian communities, and new communities in territories of recent evangelisation: the former were urged to help 'young' Churches by sending them a few priests to collaborate with the local Ordinaries for a certain period of time." With these words Pope Benedict XVI recalled the 50 anniversary of the publication, 21 April 1957, of the encyclical Fidei donum by the Servant of God Pope Pius XII, during the audience on Saturday 5 May to participants at the meeting of the Superior Council of the Pontifical Mission Societies and an international Congress of Fidei donum Missionary Priests to organised to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Encyclical.

The Holy Father recalled the twofold purpose of Pope Pius XII: "to foster in every member of the Christian people a new missionary 'flame' and promote more conscious collaboration among diocese of ancient tradition and regions of first evangelisation". In these five decades Pope Pius XII's call has been authoritatively repeated many times and there has been "a multiplication of the number of fidei donum priests, who go with religious and lay missionaries on mission to Africa and other parts of the world, at times at the cost of no few sacrifices for the sending diocese". The Holy Father then thanked all those brothers and sisters "some of whom shed their blood in order to spread the Gospel". In this period of time "missionary contact and exchange has intensified thanks also to development and increase in the means of communications, so that the Church has come into contact with every civilisation and culture. On the other hand, the exchange of gifts between ancient and recently founded ecclesial communities has led to mutual enrichment and increased awareness that all are 'missionaries', all are involved, although in different ways, in proclaiming and bearing witness to the Gospel".

Giving thanks to God for the present day missionary commitment the Holy Father also mentioned some emerging difficulties, first of all a diminishing and ageing clergy in dioceses which once used to send missionaries to distant regions. "Although we cannot ignore the problems and shadows- the Pope said -, we must look to the future with confidence giving renewed and more authentic identity to Fidei donum missionaries, in a world context undoubtedly changed compared with the 1950s of the last century. Although many are the challenges to evangelisation in our day, many too are the signs of hope which testify all over the world to encouraging missionary vitality among the Christian people. May we never forget that when the Lord was about to leave his disciples to return to Heaven, as He sent them to announce his Gospel to the ends of the earth He reassured them: "Behold I am with you always until the end of time" (Mt 28,20)."

The Holy Father concluded "this certainty must never leave us". Repeating the call for prayer made by Pius XII at that time,Pope Benedict XVI said he was sure that "the Lord will heed our incessant requests and will continue to bless the Church's missionary activity with copious apostolic fruits". (S.L.) (Agenzia Fides 7/5/2007 - righe 43, parole 679)

> LINKS

See the Pope's address in Italian: http://www.evangelizatio.org/portale/adgentes/pontefici/pontefice.php?id=778:

I contenuti del sito sono pubblicati sotto Licenza Creative Common - http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/deed.it