

horizon of man's aspiration to goodness—harms the cause of freedom. In order to recover our hope and our trust at the end of this century of sorrows, we must regain sight of that transcendent horizon of possibility to which the soul of man aspires.

17. As a Christian, my hope and trust are centered on Jesus Christ, the 2,000th anniversary of whose birth will be celebrated at the coming of the new millennium. We Christians believe that in his death and resurrection were fully revealed God's love and his care for all creation. Jesus Christ is for us God made man, and made a part of the history of humanity. Precisely for this reason, Christian hope for the world and its future extends to every human person. Because of the radiant humanity of Christ, nothing genuinely human fails to touch the hearts of Christians. Faith in Christ does not impel us to intolerance. On the contrary, it obliges us to engage others in a respectful dialogue. Love of Christ does not distract us from interest in others, but rather invites us to responsibility for them, to the exclusion of no one and indeed, if anything, with a special concern for the weakest and the suffering. Thus, as we approach the 2,000th anniversary of the birth of Christ, the church asks only to be able to propose respectfully this message of salvation, and to be able to promote, in charity and service, the solidarity of the entire human family.

Ladies and gentlemen! I come before you, as did my predecessor Pope Paul VI exactly 30 years ago, not as one who exercises temporal power—these are his words—nor as a religious leader seeking special privileges for his community. I come before you as a witness: a witness to human dignity, a witness to hope, a witness to the conviction that the destiny of all nations lies in the hands of a merciful providence.

18. We must overcome our fear of the future. But we will not be able to overcome it completely unless we do so together. The "answer" to that fear is neither coercion nor repression, nor the imposition of one social "model" on the entire world. The answer to the fear which darkens human existence at the end of the twentieth century is the common effort to build the civilization of love, founded on the universal values of peace, solidarity, justice and liberty. And the "soul" of the civilization of love is the culture of freedom: the freedom of individuals and the freedom of nations, lived in self-giving solidarity and responsibility.

We must not be afraid of the future. We must not be afraid of man. It is no accident that we are here. Each and every human person has been created in the "image and likeness" of the one who is the origin of all that is. We have within us the capacities for wisdom and virtue. With these gifts, and with the help of God's grace, we can build in the next century and the next millennium a civilization worthy of the human person, a true culture of freedom. We can and must do so! And in doing so, we shall see that the tears of this century have prepared the ground for a new springtime of the human spirit.

## John Paul to an Africa 'left by the roadside'

by Linda de Hoyos

Less than a month before his visit to the United States, Pope John Paul II took a six-day trip to three African countries—South Africa, Cameroon, and Kenya—on Sept. 14-20. The occasion of the pope's visit was the release of his Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* ("The Church in Africa"), based on the 150-page document which grew out of last year's Synod of African Bishops in Rome.

The visits to Africa and America are conceptually united as one evangelizing intervention into the world crisis today. In all his speeches in Africa, the Holy Father called upon world leaders to take responsibility to remedy the calamities that have befallen the African continent. "It is the world's moral duty to ease the suffering of Africans," the pontiff said in his first stop, in Yaounde, Cameroon.

In *Ecclesia in Africa*, made public on Sept. 15 in Yaounde, the pope quoted from the African bishops' synod to place before the church, and also the world, humanity's mission for Africa: "For many synod fathers contemporary Africa can be compared to the man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho; he fell among robbers who stripped him, beat him, and departed, leaving him half-dead. Africa is a continent where countless human beings—men and women, children and young people—are lying, as it were, on the edge of the road, sick, injured, disabled, marginalized and abandoned. They are in dire need of good Samaritans who will come to their aid."

In 1969, Pope Paul VI became the first modern-day pope to go to Africa. This latest visit is Pope John Paul II's eleventh visit to the continent. His *Ecclesia in Africa* puts forward the evangelizing mission of the church in Africa. But, as the pope says, the church must take responsibility for the "whole person," the more secular themes struck by the pope serve to function as a direct counter to the aims of British intelligence and its allies in Africa—the depopulation of the continent through wars, epidemics, and famine; and the disintegration of the African nation-states into fratricidal tribal and ethnic wars.

Echoing the themes also struck in his 1987 encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* ("On Social Concern"), the pope attacked "the crushing burden of debt, unjust trading conditions, the dumping of harmful wastes, and the overly de-

manding conditions imposed by structural adjustment programs,” referring to International Monetary Fund conditionalities.

Despite the terrible afflictions now being suffered by African people, the pope sounded the message of hope throughout his trip; in South Africa, the pope used his first visit to the country to hail the reconciliation process that has been under way since the ending of apartheid. (The pope had refused to visit South Africa until apartheid was abolished.) There, John Paul II said Mass before 100,000 people, and met privately with President Nelson Mandela, who told reporters afterwards that he had reviewed the situation in South Africa with the pope, “especially the task of nation-building and the role that is played by all the religious faiths in our country.”

As enunciated by John Paul II and the Synod of Bishops, the church in Africa is committed to aiding in the development of nations. As the pope quoted the bishops’ synod in his *Ecclesia in Africa*, “We also announce a message of hope. At this time when so much fratricidal hate inspired by political interests is tearing our peoples apart, when the burden of the international debt and currency devaluation is crushing them, we, the bishops of Africa . . . want to say a word of hope and encouragement. . . . Despite the mainly negative picture which today characterizes numerous parts

of Africa and despite the sad situations being experienced in many countries, the church has the duty to affirm vigorously that these difficulties can be overcome. She must strengthen in all Africans, hope of genuine liberation.”

The excerpts from John Paul II’s *Ecclesia in Africa* below have been chosen particularly for their enunciation in the broader crisis facing Africa, and other developing nations.

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## ‘Ecclesia in Africa’

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*The following are excerpts from Pope John Paul II’s Apostolic Exhortation Ecclesia in Africa. All quotations in the text represent the pope’s quoting of the final message of the Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops, held in May 1994. Subheads have been added.*

### On the church’s mission in Africa’s crisis

For my part, I express the hope that the church will continue patiently and tirelessly in its work as a good Samaritan. Indeed, for a long period certain regimes, which have now come to an end, were a great trial for Africans and weakened their ability to respond to situations: An injured person has to rediscover all the resources of his own humanity. The sons and daughters of Africa need an understanding presence and pastoral concern. They need to be helped to recoup their energies so as to put them at the service of the common good.

“Practices hostile to life are imposed on them by means of economic systems which serve the selfishness of the rich.” . . .

The synod fathers were thus faced with the sad fact that “the developing nations, instead of becoming autonomous nations concerned with their own progress toward a just sharing in the good and services meant for all, become parts of a machine, cogs on a gigantic wheel. This is often true also in the field of social communications, which, being run by centers mostly in the Northern Hemisphere, do not always give due consideration to the priorities and problems of such countries or respect their cultural makeup. They frequently impose a distorted vision of life and of man, and thus fail to respond to the demands of true development.” . . .

To proclaim Jesus Christ is therefore to reveal to people their inalienable dignity, received from God through the incarnation of his only Son. “Since it has been entrusted to the church to reveal the mystery of God, who is the ultimate goal of man,” continues the Second Vatican Council, “she opens up to man at the same time the meaning of his own existence, that is, the innermost truth about himself.”

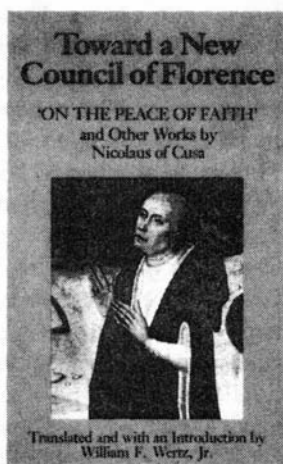
Endowed with this extraordinary dignity, people should not live in subhuman social, economic, cultural, and political conditions. This is the theological foundation of the struggle for the defense of personal dignity, for justice and social

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peace, for the promotion, liberation and integral human development of all people and of every individual. It is also for this reason that the development of peoples—within each nation and among nations—must be achieved in solidarity, as my predecessor Pope Paul VI so well observed. Precisely for this reason he could affirm, “The new name for peace is development.” It can thus rightly be stated that “integral development implies respect for human dignity and this can only be achieved in justice and peace.”

“The church,” they declared, “must continue to exercise her prophetic role and be the voice of the voiceless,” so that everywhere the human dignity of every individual will be acknowledged and that people will always be at the center of all government programs. The synod “challenges the consciences of heads of State and those responsible for the public domain to guarantee ever more the liberation and development of their peoples.” Only at this price is peace established between nations.

### **On the ‘crushing burden of debt’**

The question of the indebtedness of poor nations toward rich ones is a matter of great concern for the church, as expressed in many official documents and interventions of the Holy See.

Taking up the words of the synod fathers, I particularly feel it is my duty to urge “the heads of State and their governments in Africa not to crush their peoples with internal and external debts.” I also make a pressing appeal to the “International Monetary Fund and the World Bank and all foreign creditors to alleviate the crushing debts of the African nations.” Finally, I earnestly ask “the episcopal conferences of the industrialized countries to present this issue consistently to their governments and to the organizations concerned.” The situation of many African countries is so serious as to leave no room for attitudes of indifference and complacency.

### **On the church’s mission of reconciliation**

[As the synod fathers said:] “Tribal oppositions at times endanger if not peace, at least the pursuit of the common good of the society. They also create difficulties for the life of the churches and the acceptance of pastors from other ethnic groups.” This is why the church in Africa feels challenged by the specific responsibility of healing these divisions. . . .

“Commitment to dialogue must also embrace all Muslims of good will. Christians cannot forget that many Muslims try to imitate the faith of Abraham and to live the demands of the Decalogue. In this regard the message of the synod emphasizes that the living God, creator of heaven and earth and the Lord of history, is the Father of the one great human family to which we all belong. As such, He wants us to bear witness to Him through our respect for the values and

religious traditions of each person, working together for human progress and development at all levels.” . . .

Particular care will therefore be taken so that Islamic-Christian dialogue respects on both sides the principle of religious freedom, with all that this involves, also including external and public manifestations of faith. Christians and Muslims are called to commit themselves to promoting a dialogue free from the risks of false irenicism or militant fundamentalism, and to raising their voices against unfair policies and practices as well as against the lack of reciprocity in matters of religious freedom. . . .

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The foundation of good government must be established on the sound basis of laws which protect the rights and define the obligations of citizens. I must note with great sadness that many African nations still labor under authoritarian and oppressive regimes which deny their subjects personal freedom and fundamental human rights, especially the freedom of association and of political expression as well as the right to choose their government by free and honest elections. Such political injustices provoke tensions which often degenerate into armed conflicts and internal wars, bringing with them serious consequences such as famine, epidemics, and destruction, not to mention massacres and the scandal and tragedy of refugees. . . .

On the political front, the arduous process of building national unity encounters particular problems in the continent where most of the States are relatively young political entities. To reconcile profound differences, overcome longstanding ethnic animosities, and become integrated into international life demands a high degree of competence in the art of governing. That is why the synod prayed fervently to the Lord that there would arise in Africa holy politicians—both men and women—and that there would be saintly heads of State who profoundly love their own people and wish to serve rather than be served. . . .