



AFRICA, DON'T LOSE YOUR CULTURE

Vatican Official Urges Africans to Be on Guard, Protect "Treasure"

VATICAN CITY, OCT. 12, 2009 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- The president of the Vatican's culture congregation is urging Africans to be on guard against secularization and globalization and protect their "array of cultural and spiritual treasures."

Archbishop Gianfranco Ravasi made this invitation today when he addressed the Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops, which is under way at the Vatican through Oct. 25. The archbishop was one of 21 contributors to the 11th congregation.

According to the summary of his address published by the Vatican, the prelate began by reflecting, "Even though black is the traditional symbol of the continent, Africa, in reality, presents itself as a multicultural and multireligious colorful rainbow."

"To give just one example," he said, "UNESCO has recorded at least 250 different dialects in Cameroon, while the Bantu languages are so ideologically sophisticated as to use 24 grammatical classifications for the different qualities of the various realities."

Archbishop Ravasi characterized Africa as filled by an "array of cultural and spiritual treasures made up of popular and family traditions, of symbols and religious rites, knowledge, memory and folklore."

In this context, he offered three observations.

His first reflection expressed the hope that the synod would stimulate Africa to "guard its cultural and spiritual identity, thus preventing it from breaking up under the wind of secularization and globalization."

On the other hand, Archbishop Ravasi said, Africa must "breathe the positive values of modern universal communion and, as a result, know how to oppose nationalism, ethnic integralism, tribal differences, and religious fundamentalism."

Gray material

Secondly, Archbishop Ravasi proposed that the synod should foster dialogue with the North and West of the planet, establishing "the partnership not only of raw materials, but also of gray materials, that is of values, creating space for understanding and communion and not for colonization or, on the contrary, reciprocal rejection."

"This," the Vatican official affirmed, "is what happened in the first centuries of Christianity with the inestimable gift given to the Church and Western culture by Anthony, Pachomius, Tertullian, Cyprian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Athanasius and the great Augustine."

Finally, Archbishop Ravasi pointed to an ongoing issue in Africa: that of inculturation.

He cited Pope John Paul II, who said that inculturation, "will truly be a reflection of the Incarnation of the Word, when a culture, transformed and regenerated by the Gospel, brings forth from its own living tradition original expressions of Christian life, celebration and thought."

In that regard, Archbishop Ravasi observed, "a significant function could be carried out by the network of Catholic cultural centers that are spread throughout Africa and exist in various forms, sometimes at an academic-university level, other times at a more popular and parochial level."

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On ZENIT's Web page:

Vatican summaries of the interventions from the synod's 11th congregation: www.zenit.org/article-27164?l=english