



## PRELATE REPORTS CHURCH'S WORK IN AFRICA

### Highlights Missionary Activity and Social Efforts

VATICAN CITY, OCT. 2, 2009 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- The Church's missionary activity in Africa has resulted in increased numbers of religious vocations and more lay people committed to evangelization, said the secretary general of the Synod of Bishops.

Archbishop Nikola Eterovic stated this in a press conference this morning, in which he spoke about the upcoming Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops, which begins Sunday in Rome.

The synod, which runs until Oct. 25, will focus on the theme: "The Church in Africa, at the Service of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace. 'You Are the Salt of the Earth ... You Are the Light of the World.'"

The prelate explained that this assembly will reflect on the Church's activity on that continent, in the educational, health and social realms.

He said that the priority in Africa "is related to the urgent work of evangelization," which will also result in aiding humanity.

Archbishop Eterovic pointed out the importance of the synod's theme, stating that "a Church reconciled internally will become a credible herald of reconciliation, also at the level of society, making an irreplaceable contribution to the promotion of justice and the attainment of peace."

#### Human development

The archbishop noted that there are 53 national chapters of Caritas in Africa, which are working to promote solidarity and integral human development.

He added that the network of justice and peace commissions works through eight regional commissions and 34 national commissions in episcopal conferences.

Also, the prelate noted, there are 12 institutes and centers promoting the Social Doctrine of the Church on the continent.

He explained that among the significant endeavors of human promotion is the Foundation for the Sahel, established by Pope John Paul II on February 22, 1984, following his apostolic visit to Burkina Faso.

Over the past 25 years, the foundation has distributed some \$40 million in nine African countries, financing projects to access water and to renew cultivable land, as well as supporting education.

John Paul II also established the Good Samaritan Foundation, which depends on the Pontifical Council for Health Care Ministry, to support the sick, especially those with AIDS.

The prelate reported some data on the Catholic presence in pastoral health care, stating that in Africa the Church works in 16,178 health centers, including 1,074 hospitals, 5,373 out-patient clinics, 186 leper colonies, 753 homes for the elderly and invalids, 979 orphanages, 1,997 kindergartens, 1,590 marriage counseling centers, 2,947 social re-education centers and 1,279 other various centers.

In regard to Catholic education centers in Africa, the Church promotes 12,496 nursery schools with 1,266,444 registered children; 33,263 primary schools with 14,061 pupils, and 9,838 high schools with 3,738,238 students.

Some 54,362 students are enrolled in higher institutes, of which 11,011 are pursuing ecclesiastical studies.

The prelate thus highlighted the work of so many communities that "try to assuage the wounds opened in the spirit and body of their brothers, given the great challenges of underdevelopment and so much hunger, needs and violence, including war."