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AFRICAN PRELATE: NEW CHURCHES BENEFIT ALL FAITHS

Reports on Situation After Synod

By Carmen Elena Villa

VATICAN CITY, MARCH 17, 2010 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- A bishop from Burkina Faso is affirming that people of all faiths welcome the construction of new churches, because they benefit from the resources that come along with them.

Archbishop Séraphin Francois Rouamba of Koupela, president of the country's episcopal conference, affirmed this while in Rome for his five-yearly visit along with the other prelates of Burkina Faso.

According to the latest statistics, Catholics represent 19% of the total population in that country, Protestants 4% and Muslims 60.5%. About 15% of the inhabitants of Burkina Faso belong to traditional African religions.

The prelate spoke about the Church's relations with other creeds and said that, despite differences, the relations with Muslims on the whole are good: "For example, when we make our pastoral visits in the diocese, Protestants and Muslims also come" to the events.

He continued: "I have had Muslim businessmen who have come to see me because they want to contribute to the building of a parish.

"The reason is simple: It is known that where a parish is built, there will be a school, a day clinic and as we Catholics do not discriminate, the whole population benefits."

Evangelization

Speaking about the situation in his country, the bishop noted that one of the challenges for the local Church is to cultivate the missionary vocation.

"We must proclaim our faith in all the dioceses," he said. "Priests must agree to go wherever it is necessary, in Burkina as well as outside the country."

The archbishop of Koupela spoke about the fruits of the last Synod of Bishops for Africa, held last October in the Vatican.

"At the beginning we were somewhat skeptical," he said, "but then we realized it was timely because when we see today's Africa, the problem of justice and peace is truly very present."

"I think the Pope had a good idea when he chose this theme for our Church in Africa," commented the prelate. "It must be said that the African Churches had already placed the problem of justice and peace at the center of attention."

He emphasized the Church's mediation in his country, as well as others on that continent, on the topic of reconciliation.

"For example," Archbishop Rouamba affirmed, "in Burkina Faso the Church has contributed along with other religious confessions and traditional authorities to seek ways for a lasting reconciliation, because our different national communities have experienced terrible fractures."

The synod "strengthened the convictions of Christians and supported their initiatives," he added. "We are certain that the forthcoming post-synodal apostolic exhortation will lay more solid bases in this work."

One family

The prelate said that among the challenges of the local Church is the promotion of grass roots Christian communities, which are indispensable for the faithful "to feel themselves one family and be able to share together their faith, love and hope."

He noted that another challenge is inculturation, affirming that "if we do not evangelize our culture we will never be able to evangelize our faithful in depth, and it could become a sort of superficial evangelization."

The bishop asserted, "We are still too timid, but as we are all convinced of the need of this inculturation," the efforts will continue.

He affirmed that the local Church counts on the cooperation of the laity, especially in catechetical work. "In many places, the catechist and his family are the only expression of the Church," he said.

Archbishop Rouamba reported that in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso's capital, there is a school of theological formation for the laity that has given out 45 diplomas to people who have studied for four years.

"It is very encouraging for us to see so many lay people who, after work, come to us, because they know they need to know their religion and Jesus Christ better, and to witness him better everywhere," he affirmed.

The archbishop of Koupela reported that his diocese is growing steadily, as 5,000 children and close to 4,800 adults are baptized annually.

Archbishop Rouamba concluded by affirming that the Church in his country "has received much" and "must now correspond, within the limits of its possibilities."

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