

# Pope to Africa: Be Agents of Your Own Development

## Says It's Time for Africa to Be Continent of Hope

LUANDA, Angola, MARCH 20, 2009 ([Zenit.org](http://Zenit.org)).- Benedict XVI is encouraging the peoples of Africa to not rely simply on the help of other nations to transform their continent, but to be the "primary agents" of their own development.

The Pope said this today Here is the address Benedict XVI gave today upon visiting President José Eduardo dos Santos of Angola, along with political and civil authorities and the diplomatic corps, at the presidential palace.

"The time has come for Africa to be the Continent of Hope," the Pope said after noting that Angola itself "is on the road to recovery."

"In the wake of the twenty-seven-year civil war that ravaged this country, peace has begun to take root, bringing with it the fruits of stability and freedom," he explained. "The Government's tangible efforts to establish an infrastructure and to rebuild the institutions fundamental to development and the well-being of society have begun to foster hope among the nation's citizens."

"Armed with integrity, magnanimity and compassion," the Pontiff affirmed, "you can transform this continent, freeing your people from the scourges of greed, violence and unrest and leading them along the path marked with the principles indispensable to every modern civic democracy: respect and promotion of human rights, transparent governance, an independent judiciary, a free press, a civil service of integrity, a properly functioning network of schools and hospitals, and -- most pressing -- a determination born from the conversion of hearts to excise corruption once and for all."

Benedict XVI said African nations such as Angola should not be simply "the receivers of others' plans and solutions," but that Africans themselves be "the primary agents of their own development."

The Pope also expressed concern that the world's current financial crisis could take away from international development efforts on the continent. The "development commitments of the Doha round and likewise the implementation of the oft-repeated promise by developed countries to commit 0.7% of their Gross National Product for official development assistance [...] must not become one of its casualties."

### Family

Quoting Ecclesia in Africa, the Holy Father underlined the importance of the family in the continent, which constitutes "the foundation on which the social edifice is built."

"Yet the strains upon families, as we all know, are many indeed: anxiety and ignominy caused by poverty, unemployment, disease and displacement, to mention but a few," he explained.

"Particularly disturbing is the crushing yoke of discrimination that women and girls so often endure, not to mention the unspeakable practice of sexual violence and exploitation which causes such humiliation and trauma."

Another concern of Benedict XVI is the promotion of policies of those who, "claiming to improve the 'social edifice,' threaten its very foundations. How bitter the irony of those who promote abortion as a form of 'maternal' health care! How disconcerting the claim that the termination of life is a matter of reproductive health!"

"The Church, in accordance with the will of her divine founder, you will always find standing alongside the poorest of this continent," the Pope said. "I wish to assure each of you that for her part, through diocesan initiatives, through the innumerable educational, health care and social works of religious orders, and through the development programs of Caritas and other agencies, the Church will continue to do all she can to support families -- including those suffering the harrowing effects of HIV/Aids -- and to uphold the equal dignity of women and men, realized in harmonious complementarity."

"The Christian spiritual journey is one of daily conversion," he concluded. "To this the Church invites all leaders so that the path opened for all humanity will be one of truth, integrity, respect and compassion."

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