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## **POPE SAYS GOD'S LOVE TRIUMPHS OVER WAR AND SIN**

### **Celebrates Mass With 1 Million People**

LUANDA, Angola, MARCH 22, 2009 ([Zenit.org](#)).- Benedict XVI is calling Angolans and all Africans to acknowledge the presence of God within them, and to bring his love and forgiveness to all people around them.

The Pope said this today in a homily at a Mass in Cimangola, on the outskirts of Luanda. The Eucharistic Celebration was presided by the Pontiff with bishops of the IMBISA (Interregional Meeting of Bishops of Southern Africa), and was attended by one million people.

He noted the suffering experienced by the Angolan people as a result of war, and the consequent destruction of "families, whole communities, the fruit of men's labor, the hopes which guide and sustain their lives and work!"

He added that "this experience is all too familiar to Africa as a whole: the destructive power of civil strife, the descent into a maelstrom of hatred and revenge, the squandering of the efforts of generations of good people."

"When God's word -- a word meant to build up individuals, communities and the whole human family -- is neglected," the Holy Father explained, "and when God's law is ridiculed, despised, laughed at, the result can only be destruction and injustice: the abasement of our common humanity and the betrayal of our vocation to be sons and daughters of a merciful Father, brothers and sisters of his beloved Son."

He affirmed, "God is calling us to acknowledge the power of his presence within us," to take as our own "the gift of his love and forgiveness, and to become messengers of that merciful love within our families and communities, at school and in the workplace, in every sector of social and political life."

Conversion

Benedict XVI affirmed: "The Gospel teaches us that reconciliation, true reconciliation, can only be the fruit of conversion, a change of heart, a new way of thinking.

"It teaches us that only the power of God's love can change our hearts and make us triumph over the power of sin and division."

He added, "Only God can make all things new!"

"It is to preach this message of forgiveness, hope and new life in Christ that I have come to Africa," emphasized the Pope.

He appealed to Africans of every nation to pray "that every Christian on this great continent will experience the healing touch of God's merciful love, and that the Church in Africa will become for all, through the witness borne by its sons and daughters, a place of true reconciliation."

"You have received power from the Holy Spirit to be the builders of a better tomorrow for your beloved country," he stated.

The Pontiff continued: "On the day of your baptism you received the light of Christ. Be faithful to that gift!

"Be confident that the Gospel can affirm, purify and ennoble the profound human values present in your native culture and traditions: your strong families, your deep religious sense, your joyful celebration of the gift of life, your appreciation of the wisdom of the elderly and the aspirations of the young."

He challenged his listeners to be grateful for the faith they received, and to live up to their great legacy. "Realize that the Church, in Angola and throughout Africa," he affirmed, "is meant to be a sign before the world of that unity to which the whole human family is called, through faith in Christ the Redeemer."

He exhorted his audience: "Radiate the light of faith, hope and love in your families and communities! Be witnesses of the holy truth that sets men and women free!

"You know from bitter experience that, in comparison with the sudden, destructive fury of evil, the work of rebuilding is painfully slow and arduous.

"Living by the truth takes time, effort and perseverance: it has to begin in our own hearts, in the small daily sacrifices required if we are to be faithful to God's law, in the little acts by which we demonstrate that we love our neighbors, all our neighbors, regardless of race, ethnicity or language, and by our readiness to work with them to build together on foundations that will endure."

Youth

The Holy Father addressed a special message to young people, saying, "you are the hope of your country's future, the promise of a better tomorrow!"

He continued: "Begin today to grow in your friendship with Jesus, who is the way, and the truth and the life: a friendship nurtured and deepened by humble and persevering prayer.

"Seek his will for you by listening to his word daily, and by allowing his law to shape your lives and your relationships.

"In this way you will become wise and generous prophets of God's saving love. Become evangelizers of your own peers, leading them by your own example to an appreciation of the beauty and truth of the Gospel, and the hope of a future shaped by the values of God's Kingdom."

In this way, you will build something destined to endure, and leave to future generations a lasting inheritance of reconciliation, justice and peace. Amen.

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