

# The SVDs in the Synod of Bishops For Africa

The Synod of Bishops for Africa took place from 4th to October 26, 2009 in Rome. The theme was "The Church in Africa at the Service of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace". The SVD were represented by three members, two of whom were bishops. During this time they shared with us their views on this important event in the life of the Church.



Take the destiny in own hands!

The Bishop of Caxito, Angola, Mons. Antonio Francisco Jaca, said the Synod showed "the strength and vitality of the Church in Africa, a young, dynamic and fast growing church. There is increased awareness that it is the responsibility of Africa and Africans to take their destiny in their hands". "Another important step was the strengthening of the conviction that we must leave behind the cycle of violence and war and embrace once and for all the path of reconciliation, justice and peace. To do this, all the sons and daughters of Africa are called upon to make their contributions. The transformative power of the Gospel should be present in African cultures to purify them," he added.



For Bishop Antonio "the Synod meant a loud statement that Africa and Africans deserve respect and consideration. Africa is not an appendage of the world or, as Pope Benedict XVI said: 'the spiritual reservoir of toxic waste of the West'".

The Divine Word provincial of Angola, Fr. Zeferino Zeca Martins attended the synod at the invitation of Pope Benedict XVI. He defined the experience as "an honor, a privilege and an opportunity".

"The lack of respect for human rights, ethnic and cultural intolerance, social injustice, social exclusion and violence generate conflict and instability throughout the continent", he says. On the other side there is "the work of the called '*sister churches*' and the efforts of dialogue with our Muslim brothers", he said.

Zeferino's testimony reinforces the claims of Bishop Antonio, highlighting the African continent as "humanity's spiritual lung", the growth in number of believers and the importance of the laity and women in church life. "They are engaged in different movements and in the Apostolic Church, with greater emphasis on preparing the faithful for the sacraments".

It's time to stop "blaming other nations and continents, as the main reason of the evils and injustices of Africa" and take into our hands the destiny of the continent, always open to "support and solidarity from other brother countries and the Universal Church". "We know that justice, social welfare and the incarnation of the Gospel of Christ in Africa is responsibility of Africans themselves", he added.



### Botswana: The value of the culture of dialogue

The Bishop of the Prelature of Francistown in Botswana, the Ghanaian Frank Nubuasah emphasized the "unity of the bishops to work for justice and peace, the emphasis on the role of the laity in the church and the ability of women to achieve change and reconciliation among people "as the great contribution. For him the "Pope's presence in most of the meetings is the hope that the Church is with Africa".



Frank pointed out as a limit of the Synod how little mentioned "the need for reconciliation within the Church and some challenging and unjust structures". Referring to other continents, he sends a very direct message saying: "The assistance from rich countries should be through a system of fair trade and transparency in business. The world would do much for us if it stopped being an accomplice to some of Africa's corrupt leaders who steal and plunder the resources of our continent".

By mentioning that Botswana is experiencing a different reality of other countries in Africa, Bishop Frank stands out with joy: "Botswana is a peaceful country and a lover of peace that has been lived without conflict or war. We introduce ourselves as an example and encouragement that the rest of Africa can imitate. Botswana lives in peace; we practice a functional democracy and habits of good governance. The traditional culture of dialogue as a value has been a great advantage for Botswana".

Arlindo Pereira Dias, SVD