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BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIEGE  
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLIS

# **BOLLETTINO**

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 230529b

Monday 29.05.2023

## **Audience with children from various African nations, on the occasion of “Africa Day”**

This morning, in the Paul VI Hall, the Holy Father Francis received in audience a group of children from various African nations on the occasion of “Africa Day”, celebrated on 25 May.

The following are the words of greeting the Pope addressed to those present during the meeting:

### **Address of the Holy Father**

Dear friends,

I am happy to meet with you on this celebration of Africa Day. It is wonderful to see you, coming as you do from various countries, accompanied by your parents and a number of Ambassadors. I thank them for what they do and, through them, I want to thank all those who work for your human and spiritual growth.

Africa Day, celebrated on the annual commemoration of the founding of the African Union on 25 May 1963, is a symbol of the struggle of the entire African continent for liberation, development, and economic and social progress, as well as for the strengthening and deepening of Africa’s cultural patrimony. You are the sign of this rich cultural diversity. I invite you to dare to be “different”, to bear witness to the beauty of generosity, service, purity, courage, forgiveness, the struggle for justice and the common good, love for the poor, and social friendship. (cf. *Christus Vivit*, 36).

Your beloved African continent is facing enormous challenges such as terrorism, bad governance, corruption, massive youth unemployment, migration, conflicts between communities and the climate and food crisis, among others. In this context, you may feel helpless and discouraged, and think that your future is bleak and without prospects. Yet you are young and richly talented, you have lofty ambitions and great dreams: pursue them. My dear friends, I want to say to each of you: “Never give up on your dreams, never completely bury a calling, and never accept defeat. Keep seeking at least partial or imperfect ways to live what you have discerned to be your real calling” (ibid., 272). One of Africa’s riches is the keen intelligence of its young people. May your

commitment to studies contribute to the human and integral development of society. I think also of child soldiers and of the children who are victims of all kinds of conflicts and who need your friendship. Be close to them so that they do not feel rejected and stigmatized.

Dear young people, I want to make another very important point: Let the advice and witness of your elders enlighten you. Dialoguing with our roots, with our elders, with those who came before us, allows us to move forward. One of the challenges of life is the struggle for peace. As you well know, we are living in difficult times, with our human race in great danger. We are in grave danger. So live peace around you and within you. Be ambassadors of peace, so that the world can rediscover the beauty of love, of living together, of fraternity and solidarity.

With my Blessing I accompany you, your families and all the young people of Africa. And I ask you, please, to remember to pray for me, because I need it. Thank you!

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