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VISITA AD LIMINA APOSTOLORUM DEI PRESULI DELLA CONFERENZA EPISCOPALE DELLO ZAMBIA

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Riportiamo di seguito il discorso che il Santo Padre Benedetto XVI ha rivolto agli Ecc.mi Presuli della Conferenza Episcopale dello Zambia, incontrati questa mattina e ricevuti in questi giorni, in separate udienze, in occasione della Visita "ad Limina Apostolorum":

• DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE

My dear Brothers in Christ,

I am pleased to welcome you, the Bishops of Zambia, to this fraternal encounter during your visit *ad Limina Apostolorum*. In a special way I thank the Most Reverend Telesphore George Mpundu, who has expressed your devotion to the Holy See and to me as Peter's successor. I am grateful for your good wishes, which I gladly reciprocate. Our conversations have led me to deeper appreciation of the Catholic Church in your country: her joys, her difficulties and her hopes. Through you I greet and embrace the clergy, religious and lay faithful of Zambia. Recently in Germany I had occasion to say: "As people of prayer filled with his light, we reach out to others and bring them into our prayer and into the presence of God, who will not fail to do his part" (*Cathedral of Saint Corbinian, Freising, 14 September 2006*). I encourage you therefore to urge your people to dedicate themselves to prayer and holiness, discovering the treasure of a life built on faith in Christ. May they invite all those whom they encounter to share that treasure!

The light of holiness that shines forth in those who have discovered this treasure is enkindled at the moment of baptism. In baptism Christ liberates the believer from the dominion of sin, freeing him from an existence filled with fear and superstition and calling him to a new life. "Beloved, we are God's children now ... and everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure" (*1 Jn 3:2-3*). Indeed, the Christian has placed his trust in Christ and can be ever confident that he hears his prayers and answers them. As you strive to prepare your people for lives of genuine holiness, be sure to instruct them in the value and the practice of prayer, especially liturgical prayer, where in a sublime way the Church is united with Christ the High Priest in his eternal intercession for the salvation of the world. Moreover, the Catholic Church encourages the faithful to practise popular forms of piety. Therefore, always teach your people the value of the intercession of the saints, who are

the great friends of Jesus (cf. *Jn* 12:20-22), and particularly the special intercession of Mary, his Mother, who is always attentive to our needs (cf. *Jn* 2:1-11).

My dear Brother Bishops, I have no doubt that you will continue to devote your lives with generous love to God's people in Zambia. The Lord has chosen you to keep them and guide them on the way that leads to sanctity. Do so with wise advice, unwavering resolve and paternal affection. Saint Jerome in his Commentary on Saint Paul's Letter to Titus puts it this way: "Let the bishop practise abstinence with respect to all the troubles that can agitate the soul: let him not be inclined to anger or crushed by sadness and let him not be tortured by fear" (cf. vv. 8-9, *PL* 26, 603b-42). This is especially true in your dealings with your brother priests, who at times can be led astray by the many temptations of contemporary society. As pastors and fathers to your co-workers in the vineyard, you must always communicate to them the joy of serving the Lord with a proper detachment from the things of this world. Tell them that they are close to the Pope's heart and in his daily prayers. With you I encourage them to stand steadfast in the true faith and to look forward with living hope to the joyful possession of that undefiled, imperishable treasure, won for us by Jesus Christ (cf. *1 Pet* 1:4).

We believe that the Church is holy. When you urge your priests to live holy lives in accordance with their calling, when you preach generous love and fidelity in marriage and when you exhort everybody to practise the works of mercy, remind them of the Lord's own words: "You are the light of the world ... Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (*Mt* 5:14-16). Holiness is a divine gift, which manifests itself in love of God and love of neighbour. Dear Brothers, show your people the beautiful face of Christ by living a life of genuine love. Show Christ's compassion especially for the poor, for refugees, for the sick and for all who suffer. At the same time, in your teaching continue to proclaim the need for honesty, family affection, discipline and fidelity, all of which have a decisive impact on the health and stability of society.

Your visit to Rome is a visible sign of your personal search for holiness and your ardent desire to act as heralds of the Gospel, following the heroic example of the Apostles Peter and Paul. Saint Matthew expresses the Church's missionary mandate as follows: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (*Mt* 28:18-20). This passage is a source of great hope for all who devote their energies to the Apostolic Ministry. These words remind us of the constant and active presence of the living Christ in his holy Catholic Church. I invite you and those who cooperate with you in your ministry to meditate on them and to renew your trust in the Lord. As you return home, take with you my affectionate greetings to the people of your country. May your witness as men filled with the hope of the resurrection lead them to an ever greater appreciation of the joys that the Lord has promised us. To each of you and to all those in your pastoral care I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing.

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