



GERMAN-AFRICAN BISHOPS STRESS NEED FOR RENEWAL OF MISSIONARY ZEAL FOR PROMOTION OF INTEGRAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

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MADAGASCAR -

Bishops of the German and African Catholic churches have reiterated the need for renewal of the missionary zeal focused on integral human development, describing it as an indispensable part of their apostolate mandate. They therefore called on the clergy, religious and lay faithful as well as professionals in all sectors of human endeavour and socio-political and traditional leadership “to contribute to this work of bringing all persons the fullness of life that Christ came to accomplish”.

The bishops made the call for this renewal of missionary zeal in their message issued at the end of the eight German-African Bishops’ Meeting, held recently at Antananarivo, the capital of Madagascar. It was attended by representatives of the German Bishops’ Conference and the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM). The theme of the meeting was: Integral Human Development and the message was signed by; His Excellency, Archbishop Gabriel Mbilingi, Archbishop of Angola and SECAM President and His Eminence, Reinhard Cardinal Marx, Archbishop of Munich-Freising, Germany, and President of the German Bishops’ Conference.

According to the bishops, they discovered the inseparable relevance of human development to the Church’s mission of evangelization during the course of their deliberations. They declared: “In order to be complete and integral,

human development must ensure the total well-being of the person, of every person and of every human society.”

They continued: “it must involve the sustained growth of every one, ensuring that he/she enjoys just and peaceful relationships in a thriving environment of cultural, political, economic, social and spiritual wholeness among others.”

They added: “This wholeness should also include the wellbeing of his/her family, society and nature. In fact, it must also guarantee respect for the sacredness of human life, the dignity of every person and the integrity of creation, which Pope Francis calls ‘our common home’ in *Laudato Si.*”

Noting that the Church in the two countries still has a lot to do in the evangelization apostolate, the bishops pointed out that Africa has the challenges of poverty, misery, disease and despair “in the midst of God’s plentiful gifts of human and natural resources”, adding that “these are ill caused by human greed and corruption, injustices of all kinds and violence and fratricidal wars, etc.” They also identified the dearth of spiritual values, excessive materialism and consumerism, individualism, little no respect for the life and rights of the unborn, of the aged and the infirm, as the challenges of Europe.

Pointing out that the Church still has a lot to do in her evangelization mission in the two continents, the bishops declared: “It is not simply the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ to all, but also the work of deepening our Christian formation and the formation of consciences of our political and socio-economic leaders, as well as the offering of true witness of our faith in Christ Jesus as the Lord and Saviour of all men and women, believers and otherwise.” The bishops in their Resolution outlined a 7-point agenda that would facilitate their efforts at addressing the challenges identified.