

SECAM GOLDEN JUBILEE - KAMPALA - JULY 2019

THEME:

Church-Family of God in Africa, Celebrate your Jubilee! Proclaim Jesus Christ your Saviour

I. CONTEXT OF THE JUBILEE

«You shall make the fiftieth year a holy year, and you shall proclaim liberation for all the inhabitants of the land » Lev 25:10).

You shall proclaim « a year of the Lord's favor » to the entire creation (cf. Luke 4, 18-19)

For centuries, Africa has received and proclaimed the Gospel. The church in Africa, 50 years ago, took the initiative to constitute herself into the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar and Islands (SECAM). On this occasion, Pope Paul VI came to confirm in faith its resolution and strongly reiterated the importance of her mission:

«You Africans, you are now your own missionaries»

«You can and ought to have an African Christianity»

In celebrating the SECAM Jubilee, each faithful, every Christian community in Africa, Madagascar, is invited to let the call to this mission resonate in him/her and respond to it with zeal.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE JUBILEE

To celebrate God's wondrous deeds, his gifts of baptism and of the Church; to reflect on the progress made so far, with the aim of deepening our faith, rooted in Christ, and to resolutely engage ourselves in the mission of proclaiming the Gospel in words and actions.

To achieve this, every Christian and every community is invited to fully enter into the celebration of the Jubilee, by

- Thanksgiving,
- Remembrance of the progress made,
- Repentance/conversion and reconciliation,
- Renewed commitment to witness to Christ in Africa, Madagascar and the Islands.

III. JUBILEE ACTIVITIES

Thanksgiving for:

- The Church-Family of God, community of faith.
- Our identity as baptized people and our mission as witnesses to the Gospel.
- The gift of the Eucharist which brings us together; strengthens and commits us to become Eucharistic people so that others through us may have life in fullness.
- The gift of the sacramental life of the Church.
- SECAM and all the other ecclesial structures and institutions that have developed within the Church-Family of God during the past 50 years.
- The pastoral and social works that have enabled the Church to be close to those in need (Mt 25:31-46).
- Cultural and educational works.

Memories of the accomplished path

Identifying the initiatives or activities of the Church-Family of God at all levels: personal, family, parochial, diocesan, national, regional and continental (successes, failures, joys and difficulties encountered).

- How do we in our families, parishes, religious congregations, nations, regions, and continent, acknowledge the progress made by the Church-Family of God?
- What measures have we put in place to promote justices, reconciliation, peace and development and to help internalize, assimilate and testify truly that we are God's Family?
- What mutual support do we offer each other in response to the fact that we are the Church-Family of God?
- What kind of spiritual and material resources do we disposed of?

Repentance/Conversion and Reconciliation

- Identify the activities to be undertaken towards repentance/conversion and reconciliation in our daily life.
- Promote personal and community approaches of forgiveness,
- To be aware of our shortcomings and negligence in acknowledging and developing the immense human and natural resources of Africa in favor of our populations.
- Recognize the strengths and weaknesses of the methods of evangelization used till today and to update the necessary pastoral initiatives.
- Develop activities for reconciliation and unity at all levels: family, Christian communities, villages, regions, countries and continent.

Renewed commitment in bearing witness to Christ

- Renewing our life with Christ.
- Strengthening the sense of personal responsibility to the Gospel among the lay faithful, the consecrated persons and the pastors.

- Organizing formation sessions to deepen our knowledge of Christ and his Gospel.
- Identifying socio-cultural and economic barriers to responding to the demands of the Mission.
- Rethinking and promoting the involvement of Christians in political life.
- Developing, in institutions of formation (universities, seminaries, novitiates, and associations), initiatives of communion and action for deeper evangelization and transformation of society.
- Promoting an organic solidarity among ecclesial service structures in a spirit of subsidiarity and complementarity (cf. Pauline image of the Church as the body of Christ).
- Promoting pastoral actions or strategies, based on the Social Doctrines of the Church, proper to different groups and associations as well as socio-professional institutions (family businesses, cooperative structures, community groups for economic purposes, etc.), in view of human development.
- Recognizing and promoting the history and cultural values of Africa to meet the major challenges for its transformation.
- Indicate the commitments to be promoted in order to further respond to the mission of the Church-Family of God.
- Identify the strengths and weaknesses of the Church-Family of God, as well as the opportunities and threats for a far-reaching evangelization.
- Stimulate and encourage ecumenical and interreligious relations.
- Remember that the grace of God is gratuitous and dismiss any aspects of *simony* in the celebration of the sacraments and the use of sacramentals.
- Create awareness of the pastoral care of the needy (the sick, the aged, prisoners, refugees, migrants, the physically challenged, etc.), (cf. Lk 6:17-19).
- Strengthen pastoral care for children, the youth and women.

IV. JUBILEE CALENDAR

1. August 2018: The Church Communities

Text: Acts 2, 42-47

Meditation: The example of the first Christian Communities

The life of the first Christian communities is rooted in the teaching of the apostles, fraternal communion, prayer, the breaking of bread witnessing to Christ.

In fact, the Church is born and nurtured about the apostles who were the direct witnesses of the life and teaching of the Lord Jesus. In a world of inequality, the early Christians expressed their fellowship through sharing, so that “no one was ever in need”.

In moments of difficulty or joy, Christians are united with their Lord and with one another by daily and incessant prayer. The summit of these meetings in the Lord is the breaking of bread, the Eucharist, where the disciples of Jesus celebrate the death and resurrection of their Lord.

This is how the first Christians testified about Jesus, dead and risen from the dead. They found a favorable reception among the people. They show us the way forward, to each of us, to our communities, to our parishes.

Continued meditation: The parish, Church-Family of God

The parish is by nature the living environment and the usual place of worship for the faithful, where they can express and implement the initiatives that the Christian faith and charity of the community of believers suggest. It is the place where the communion of various groups and movements, which must find spiritual support and material support, manifests itself. Priests and laity will ensure that the life of the parish is harmonious, within the framework of the Church as Family where all are "diligent in the teaching of the Apostles, faithful to fraternal communion, to the breaking of bread, to prayers" (Acts 2:42) (John Paul II, Ecclesia in Africa, no. 100).

Actions for Implementing the Fruits of the Meditation

Each group is to identify, in its own context, concrete actions it needs to practicalise the fruit of its meditation in line with the jubilee requirements of:

- Thanksgiving,
- Remembrance of the progress made; failings/shortcomings
- Repentance; forgiveness; reconciliation
- Return to our baptismal roots as members of God’s family and household
- Renewed commitment to witnessing to Christ and his gospel
- Any other

2. September 2018: The Word of God (Catechists and Animators)

Text: John 1, 1-18

Meditation: Jesus, the Word become flesh (John 1:14)

At the very beginning of his gospel, in the Prologue, Saint John presents Jesus as God Word, become flesh: “In *the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*” (John 1, 1). The only Son of the Father, Jesus, God-Word, participates in his creative activity. He became one of us to join us in the life of the Father. In him, God creates a new humanity, those who have welcomed him (2 Cor 5:17).

Later, in chapter 6, John continues his meditation. He shows Jesus the Word that gives himself as food. Recalling the experience of walking in the desert, Jesus invites us to believe in him, to allow ourselves to be nourished and watered by his word. Only his word is able to make the deserts of our lives bloom. His word is as invigorating in its own way as his body and blood. **(Comment: We need this qualification; otherwise we join those Christians who do not believe in the Eucharist, but hold that the Bible alone suffices)**

Therefore, Christians must constantly nourish themselves with the Word of God. But for this word to bear fruit, it must be well understood. Therefore, there is a need for Bible reading training in our groupings and parishes, for all Christians, but especially for catechists and facilitators of Christian communities.

Continued meditation: To know better the Word of God

*For the Word of God to be known, loved, contemplated and preserved in the hearts of the faithful (see Luke 2: 19.51), efforts to facilitate access to Holy Scripture, including full or partial translations of the Bible, as much as possible in collaboration with other Churches and Christian Communities, and accompanied by reading guides for prayer, studying in family or in community. In addition, there is a need to promote Bible formation for members of the clergy, religious, catechists and lay people in general; to plan celebrations of the Word; to promote the biblical apostolate through the Biblical Center for Africa and Madagascar and other similar structures to be encouraged at all levels. In short, we will try to put Sacred Scripture in the hands of all the faithful from a very young age (John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 58).*

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3. October 2018: Mission and Movements for the Apostolate

Text: Mark: 16, 9-20

Meditation: Sending on mission

The resurrection of Jesus is the foundation of the Christian faith. But this experience, the apostles cannot keep for themselves. They must announce it to the whole world. The risen and living Jesus works with them and is with them.

Yet the Evangelist Mark insists very much on the silence of Jesus. During the passion, one has the impression that God has abandoned his son. After the resurrection, the first women who received the news of the resurrection flee all trembling in fear and awe of the event.

Mark wants to show us that the mission first is not about publicity. Before going to announce Jesus, one must first take time to contemplate him in silence, in prayer. The silence of God in the passion as in resurrection does not mean his absence, but a discreet and effective presence. In raising Jesus from the dead, God shows that he does not abandon his own to themselves. But that does not mean they are spared from hardship.

Today, the mission is entrusted to the Church, that is, to all believers, each according to his/her vocation in the Church. We are all missionaries. This is a demanding mission. As the whole of Mark's Gospel shows, mission is an adventure in the footsteps of the Crucified and risen Christ. It is a mission of prayer, witnessed by word and deed. One of the fields of this mission is the commitment to reconciliation, justice and peace.

Continued meditation: the mission of reconciliation, justice and peace

*Africa's commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ is a precious treasure that I entrust at the beginning of the third millennium to the bishops, priests, permanent deacons, consecrated persons, catechists and laity of this dear continent and neighboring islands. This mission is calling on Africa to deepen the Christian vocation. It invites Africa to live, in the name of Jesus, reconciliation between people and communities, and to promote peace and justice for all in the truth (Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus*, 1).*

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4. November 2018: Saints of Africa and Madagascar

Text: Matthew 5, 3-12

Meditation: The Beatitudes

The text of the Beatitudes according to St. Matthew is proposed to us on the feast of All Saints. The beatitudes tell us in a certain way who Jesus is. He is the poor man who put all his trust in God. By his gentleness and humility, he bears witness to the tenderness and mercy of his Father. In solidarity with the suffering and the unjustly treated, he gave his life, so that justice and peace could prevail. He proposes happiness that is not built on might, power, knowledge, possessions or fame. But he leads us on the risky path of self-giving, for God and for others.

Throughout history, elsewhere as in Africa, many have accepted and still accept to take this risk. We remember the famous African saints and martyrs. But let us also think of those saints and martyrs who daily risk their lives to save others. Let us not forget those men and women who remain honest in a world that is often corrupt. Think of those who refuse divisions and opt for fraternity without borders. May all our saints, known and unknown, help us to experience beatitudes every day!

Continued Meditation: Living the Beatitudes

*The disciple of Christ, united to his Master, must contribute to forming a just society where all can participate actively with their own talents in social and economic life. They will be able to earn what is necessary for them to live according to their human dignity in a society where justice will be vivified by love. Christ does not propose a revolution of the social or political type, but that of love, realized in the total gift of his person by his death on the Cross and his Resurrection. On this revolution of love are fused the Beatitudes (Mt 5, 3-12). They provide a new horizon of justice inaugurated in the paschal mystery and through which we can become righteous and build a better world. The justice of God, revealed to us by the Beatitudes, raises the humble and lowers those who exalt themselves. It is realized in fullness, it is true, in the Kingdom of God which will be realized at the end of time. But the righteousness of God is already manifested where the poor are comforted and admitted to the feast of life (Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus*, 26).*

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5. December 2018: Life and Creation

Text: Ap 21, 1-5

Meditation: New Heaven, New Earth

In Chapter 21 of the Apocalypse, John discovers all the hope that must live in the Christian, despite the difficulties of existence. Through images, the author considers the total renewal of history and the world by the risen and living Jesus. He comes to rebuild everything for a new life.

In traditional Africa, life is essentially health, happiness, children ... The Word of God invites us to consider life as part of the whole of society, history and of the ecological environment.

Indeed, the deterioration of the environment is a sign of the deterioration of the life of Africans, as well as that of their economic, political, cultural, cosmic, ethical and even spiritual environment. The fight for life takes into account the struggle for a healthy environment. In addition, the commitment to the ecological concerns must take into account all the places where life is destroyed: the political, the economic, the social, the cultural, and the ethical. In other words, the fight for the environment is at the same time an engagement for peace, justice, development, health, in short for life.

Continued Meditation: Respect for Life and the Ecosystem

Businessmen and women, governments and economic groups engage in exploitation programs that pollute the environment and cause unprecedented desertification. Serious damage is being done to nature and forests, flora and fauna, and countless species may disappear forever. All of this threatens the entire ecosystem and, consequently, the survival of humanity. I urge the Church in Africa to encourage the rulers to protect the fundamental goods of land and water, for the human life of present and future generations, and for peace among peoples (Benedict XVI, Africae Munus, 80).

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6. January 2019: The Family, Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations

Text: Lk 2, 22-40

Meditation: The Family of Nazareth

Like all Jewish families of the time, Joseph and Mary perform all the rites prescribed by the Law. Jesus affirms the importance of the human family. But his radical reference to the Father invites us to build the blood-based family in the faith and the love of God, giving it a stronger density. Jesus does not deny the blood-based family. But, recalling his divine sonship, He proposes a new way of being a family.

In the early Church, the family was often the first cell of the Church. We understand the importance that the Church gives to the pastoral care of the family. In a densely populated Africa, the family must once again become the first place of evangelization, prayer, learning the values of reconciliation, justice and peace.

This is why, in many cases, the family is the first place for promoting ecumenical and interreligious relations through dialogue. It is not always easy. But the last word must always be love.

Continued meditation: the family at the service of ecumenical and interreligious relations

*As many social movements reveal, interreligious relations condition peace in Africa as elsewhere. Therefore, it is important for the Church to promote dialogue as a spiritual attitude so that believers can learn to work together, for example in associations oriented towards peace and justice, in a spirit of trust and mutual aid. Families must be educated in listening, brotherhood and respect without fear of others. Only one thing is necessary (cf. Luke 10:42) and capable of appeasing the thirst for eternity of every human being and the desire for unity of all humanity: the love and contemplation of the One before whom Saint Augustine exclaimed: "O eternal truth, true charity, dear eternity (Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus*, 88).*

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7. February 2019: The Sick and the Physically Challenged

Text: Jn 5, 1-18

Meditation: The cure of the paralytic

In taking the initiative to heal the paralytic, Jesus shows his interest in the person and in the whole person. God the Father does not rejoice in suffering. He does not orchestrate it. Therefore, we must fight against suffering with the weapons of science, but also those of faith, prayer and sacraments celebrated in community. The Christian considers healing in all its dimensions. He or she engages in the fight against all forms of diseases that threaten Africa and their causes: violence, poverty, injustice, corruption, fears ... As to the paralytic, Jesus is telling us: "Get up and walk".

With him, we walk on the path of resurrection, but also on that of the cross. In fact, the Risen Jesus has assumed human suffering to the utmost, even the most total distress. With us, He cried aloud, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" (Mark 15, 34 // Mt 27, 46). When faced with challenges, we need to cling with all our strength and faith in the Crucified One, to hope; and above all to testify to the tenderness of the Father. In these moments of helplessness, strong and concrete love is the best answer to suffering.

Continued Meditation: Love in the face of suffering

No society, even developed, can do without the fraternal service animated by love. "He who wants to free himself from love is preparing to free himself from man as such. There will always be suffering, which calls for consolation and help. There will always be loneliness. Likewise, there will always be situations of material necessity, for which help is indispensable, in the sense of a concrete love for the neighbor. "It is love that soothes wounded, lonely, abandoned hearts. It is love that engenders peace or restores it to the human heart and establishes it among men (Benedict XVI, Africae Munus, 29).

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8. March 2019: Refugees, Migrants, Displaced Persons

Text: Dt 26, 5

[Commentary](#) or Meditation (in line with the rest)?

According to the book of Deuteronomy, the offering of the first fruits of the harvest to the Lord was accompanied by a solemn profession of faith. It was a reminder to the people that their ancestors were not from Canaan: “My Father was a wandering Aramaean. He went down to Egypt, where he lived as an immigrant with a few people who accompanied him” (Dt 26, 5).

The experience of migration is universal. Therefore, the Bible asks us to be attentive to migrants and foreigners, as well as to orphans and widows. Fragile, the migrant has the right to the solicitude of the Lord, but also to that of the community: *“The Lord is the incorruptible judge who executes justice to the orphan and the widow, and who loves the migrant by giving him/her food and clothing”* (Dt 10, 18).

The Word of God invites us to fight for migrants at the level of hospitality and legally. It calls us to perceive migration as a rewarding encounter. We think not only of migrations to other continents, but also within the country and continent. How do we welcome each other as Christ in our neighborhoods, our villages, or our Christian communities?

The Church shows support for African migrants outside and inside the continent. She challenges all, especially Africans, to assume responsibility for migrants.

[Continued meditation: Solidarity with migrants](#)

“The Church remembers that Africa was a place of refuge for the Holy Family who fled Herod's bloodthirsty political power in search of a land that promised them security and peace. The Church will continue to make her voice heard and to invest in defending all people” (Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus*, 85).

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9. April 2019: Vocations, Children and Young People

Text: Mark 1, 16-20

Meditation: The Call of the First Disciples

Mark places the call of the first disciples at the very beginning of Jesus' ministry. He shows as well that the disciples were associated from the beginning of the mission of Jesus. To follow on his footsteps, the future apostles give up their nets, their jobs.

The call of the first disciples invites us to meditate on the call addressed to all the baptized, but especially the youth. It is first of all the call of all to the Christian life, to follow Jesus. This call is radical for everyone.

But it is also about the diversity of vocations, either in the life of the laity or in the various forms of consecrated life. Priestly life and the consecrated life are a service and a sign at the heart of the Church that requires conversion. In convening for October 2018, a synod on the theme: "Youth, Faith and Vocational Discernment", Pope Francis is calling all young people to a radical attachment to Christ. In fact, the vocational journey is first of all this call that Jesus addresses to all, to follow him on the path of the Christian life, of conversion. Benedict XVI already emphasized its radicality.

Continued meditation: The Youths in the Future of the Church and Society

*Dear youths, solicitations of all kinds: ideologies, sects, money, drugs, easy sex, violence ..., can tempt you. Be vigilant: those who make these proposals want to destroy your future! In spite of the difficulties, do not be discouraged and do not give up your ideals, your application and your diligence in human, intellectual and spiritual formation! To acquire discernment, the necessary strength, and the freedom to resist these pressures, I encourage you to put Jesus Christ at the center of your life through prayer, but also through the study of the Holy Scriptures, the practice of the Sacraments, formation in the Social Doctrine of the Church, as well as your active and enthusiastic participation in church gatherings and movements. Cultivate in you the aspiration towards fraternity, justice and peace. The future is in the hands of those who know how to find strong reasons to live and to hope. If you want it, the future is in your hands, because the gifts that the Lord has deposited in each of you, shaped by the encounter with Christ, can bring authentic hope to the world. (Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus*, 63)*

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10. May 2019: Mary and Woman

Text: Luke 1, 46-55

[Comment \(or Meditation?\): The Hymn of Mary](#)

After the Annunciation, Mary visits her cousin Elizabeth. The dialogue between the two women ends with the hymn of Mary, the Magnificat. Mary thinks of the annunciation. She had answered the angel that she is a humble servant. She embodies all the qualities of fragility. She is a woman in the patriarchal Jewish society and in the Greco-Roman world where the slave is only an object. She is the daughter of a people crushed by the Romans.

Yet she does not despair but participates in the salvation and liberation of her people. As a disciple, she will be the sign of the newness of God. Mary evokes the upheaval of situations and values that characterize the transition from the old to the new world. The intervention of God that began with the Annunciation will give priority to the humble and the crushed.

Mary, the young woman of Nazareth, is not a submissive young woman. She has the build of the matriarchs, prophetesses and those that had endurance in the Old and New Testaments. She is the symbol of a responsible woman. She represents all the women who challenge death every day and make life bloom.

[Continued meditation: Women in the Church and in the world](#)

*You, the Catholic women, you join in the evangelical tradition of the women who assisted Jesus and the apostles (cf. Lk 8, 3)! You are for the local Churches as their "backbone" because your number, your active presence and your organizations are of great support for the Church's apostolate. When peace is threatened and justice flouted, when poverty is growing, you stand up for human dignity, family, and the values of religion. May the Holy Spirit continually provoke in the Church holy and courageous women who bring their precious spiritual contribution to the growth of our communities! (Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus*, 58).*

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11. June 2019: Professionals and Political Actors

Text: Luke 12, 41-44

[Commentary \(or Meditation?\): The Parable of the Two Stewards](#)

The Church-Family of God is a servant. This is recounted in the Lucan parable of the faithful steward (Lk 12:41-44).

The parable shows us what is expected of the steward. He/she is a zealous, competent and honest worker. He/she distributes food ration to the servants, budgets for the maintenance of the family. He/she is a responsible economist and commercial agent who supervises the workers, and building projects; manages the oil, industry; pays workers their salaries, etc. Aware and faithful, he/she is trustworthy. As a reward, he/she is given even more important responsibilities. This parable can inspire a spirituality of engagement of professionals and political actors. The second African synod studied it in a way. The human and religious formation of the laity must be strengthened, relying on the Word of God and the social doctrines of the Church. It is necessary to accompany, if possible in an ecumenical context, the various professionals, community leaders, politicians and the military. The Christian as "the salt of the earth and light of the world" (Mt 5, 13-14), should be a real model for fellow socio-political and military decision-makers.

[Continued the meditation: Salt of the earth and light of the world](#)

The disciple of Christ, united to his Master, must contribute to forming a just society where all can participate actively with their own talents in social and economic life. They will be able to earn what is necessary for them to live according to their human dignity in a society where justice will be vivified by love. Christ does not propose a revolution of the social or political type, but that of love, realized in the total gift of his person by his death on the Cross and his Resurrection. On this revolution of love are fused the Beatitudes (Mt 5, 3-12). They provide a new horizon of justice inaugurated in the paschal mystery and through which we can become righteous and build a better world. The justice of God, revealed to us by the Beatitudes, raises the humble and lowers those who exalt themselves. It is realized in fullness, it is true, in the Kingdom of God which will be realized at the end of time. But the righteousness of God is already manifested where the poor are comforted and admitted to the feast of life (Benedict XVI, Africae Munus, 26).

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