



SYMPOSIUM OF EPISCOPAL CONFERENCES OF AFRICA AND MADAGASCAR

**MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF SECAM ON  
THE FEAST OF PENTECOST**

*“Hope does not disappoint, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (Roman 5:5)*

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,  
Peace be with you.

For fifty days we have celebrated Christ's Resurrection in faith. And now we celebrate the solemnity of Pentecost, recalling the descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles and believers. In celebrating this event, we are invited to meditate on the action of the Holy Spirit in the Church and in the world.

**The action of the Holy Spirit in the Church and the world**

The stories told by the author of the Acts of the Apostles (St. Luke) take us back to the beginnings of Christianity and the Church, represented by the first Christian communities led by the apostles and their assistants. What's striking is how dynamic these communities were, even though they appeared to be embryonic. Moreover, their strength lay in the spirit of communion and solidarity that reigned within them, as chapter 2 of the Acts of the Apostles attests: *“Those who accepted Peter's word were baptized (...) They were assiduous in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayer. (...) All the believers lived together, and had everything in common; they sold their goods and possessions, and shared the proceeds among all according to each one's needs” (Acts 2:41-42.45)*. This spirit of communion and solidarity is the fruit of the Spirit's action in the Church, and is proof that the Holy Spirit is working discreetly in this Church so that it can fulfil its mission in the world.

We know that in our Continent, these two values of communion and solidarity are also those which our respective cultures consider to be the pillars of social life and of living together. We therefore need to draw inspiration from the example of the first Christian communities, so that we can give a special stamp to our cultural values, thanks to the gifts we receive from the Holy Spirit, and thus become *“salt of the earth and light of the world”*, capable of changing the face of the world under the influence of the same Spirit. Indeed, the Holy Spirit is present in the world, and acts in the world through the Church and people of good will, so that humanity can live in peace.





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### Pentecost and Globalization

The author of the Acts of the Apostles tells us that peoples from the four corners of the earth gathered in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost: *“Parthians, Medes and Elamites, people from Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, from the province of Pontus and that of Asia, from Phrygia and Pamphylia, from Egypt and the Libyan lands near Cyrene, Romans passing through, Jews by birth and converts, Cretans and Arabs, all we hear speaking in our tongues about the wonders of God”* (Acts 2:8-10).

According to some commentators, the gathering in this symbolic place steeped in history can be seen as globalization *avant la lettre*. In fact, the message that emerges from this text is that the Holy Spirit has broken down the barriers separating peoples. Despite the multiplicity of languages, people manage to make themselves understood, and the extraordinary thing is that they hear the word of God in their own languages. And today we rejoice in this “miracle of tongues”, as Christian rites and the Eucharistic liturgy are celebrated in vernacular languages.

Here we find confirmation of the universal dimension of Christ's salvation, one of the miracles performed by the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. While it's fair to say that the spread of Christianity has brought peoples together to such an extent that it appears to be a forerunner of globalization, there's nothing to suggest that Christianity, as we live it in the Catholic Church, is in harmony with globalization, which has conveyed a single way of thinking (technocratic ideology, as Pope Francis put it in his encyclical *Laudato si*), while promoting a lifestyle focused on the satisfaction of essentially material and economic needs. Yet, according to the Church's social teaching, *“there are collective and qualitative needs that cannot be satisfied by market mechanisms (...) for there are important human needs that escape its logic”* (St. John Paul II, Encyclical *Centesimus annus*, no. 40). And there's more: globalization has not solved the problem of poverty in the so-called Third World countries, particularly in Africa. In fact, what we are witnessing today, Pope Francis tells us, is the globalization of indifference; as a result, *“we become incapable of feeling compassion for the cry of pain of others”* since *“we are anesthetized by the culture of well-being”* (Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*).

However, not everything about globalization is negative. We need only cite the example of the Internet and information and communication technologies, thanks to which peoples are interconnected and the bonds of solidarity between nations strengthened. However, the challenge we face today, and which emerges from development issues in these difficult times, is to show that ethics should be taken into consideration in commercial relations. From now on, we need to give direction to economic activities by insisting on the common good, justice and the values handed down by our cultures in Africa, such as the family, solidarity, mutual aid, fraternity and the defence of life.





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In so doing, we allow ourselves to be guided by the Holy Spirit, who enlightens us with gifts such as discernment, wisdom and the fear of God, while purifying our cultures so that they help us to live Pentecost, while listening to the Word of God and journeying with our Christian brothers and sisters around the world, with a view to live synodality in the Church.

### **Building peace for a better future in Africa**

Working for peace in Africa and throughout the world is one of the challenges we face today, so fragile is this peace made by wars. On our continent in particular, we need to pray unceasingly for peace, while imploring the Holy Spirit to grant African leaders the spirit of intelligence (discernment), wisdom and the fear of God. These gifts are important if they are to maintain peace on a continent plagued by political conflict and civil war, with their trail of death and displaced people.

We are well aware that these wars are linked to the exploitation of natural and mining resources, resulting in permanent insecurity for the populations, given that these resources are geopolitical stakes for foreign countries, including the great powers. Despite this gloomy picture, glimmers of hope are appearing thanks to the initiatives taken by the Bishops of Africa to maintain and restore peace in certain regions of Africa. This is evidenced by the actions which have been taken by the bishops of the RECOWA region to dissuade ECOWAS leaders from using force to restore constitutional order in Niger, in order to avoid bloodshed and forced displacement of populations. Another initiative that will go down in history is that of the ACEAC bishops, who organized a giant mass for peace for the bishops of the Great Lakes region in Goma on January 28 of this year.

Such initiatives are commendable, and deserve to be supported both by our prayer and by our commitment to justice and peace. As Christians, we are called to become peacemakers and sow the seeds of hope for a better future in Africa.

Let us imbue ourselves with this hope that was breathed into us by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, for *“hope does not disappoint, since the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us”* (Roman 5:5).

Accra, Ghana, 19 May 2024, Pentecost Sunday

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