



SYMPOSIUM OF EPISCOPAL CONFERENCES OF AFRICA AND MADAGASCAR

**Message of His Eminence Fridolin Cardinal Ambongo Besungu, President of the
Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) to the Youth
on the occasion of the first West Africa Youth Days**

Dear young people,

With joy and hope, I greet you in the Holy Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Peace be with you all, dear young people of our beloved continent, especially the young people of West Africa.

It is with great joy that I learned that you are preparing to gather in Ghana for the first **West Africa Youth Days**, from **7 to 12 September 2026 in Accra, Ghana**, where thousands of young people from across the Region are expected.

The inspiring theme of this memorable gathering, ***“Take Courage (John 16: 33): Catholic Youth as Actors and Agents of Peace and Hope in West Africa,”*** is very significant for our continent today.

This is truly a historic moment for our Church, for this region and for the whole of Africa. The Catholic Bishops of West Africa, through the Reunion of Episcopal Conferences of West Africa (RECOWA/CERAOWA), have made this gathering possible because they believe in you. They believe in your faith, your energy, your creativity and your capacity to transform society.

The West Africa Youth Days offer you a unique opportunity to experience the spirit of the World Youth Days here in this region. It is a very blessed occasion to encounter young people from different countries and cultures, celebrating your faith together, and discovering that, despite our differences, we are one family in Christ and, above all, one human family.

Beloved young people, take courage! West Africa needs you. Our continent needs young people who are not afraid to dream, to serve and to build. Do not be afraid to be voices of hope and agents of peace in communities sometimes wounded by insecurity, violence, division and conflicts. We need your courage to face poverty, unemployment and the many challenges before you; your creativity, initiative and entrepreneurial spirit to create opportunities, not only for yourselves, but also for others. We also need your commitment to care for our common home and to respond courageously to the challenges of climate change.

Beloved young people, the Church in Africa believes in you and in the power of your dreams. We know that the challenges you face today do not have the final word. You are not merely the future of Africa; you are a living force in Africa today.

Do not be afraid! With faith in Christ, courage in your hearts, creativity in your minds and solidarity with one another, you can overcome these challenges and become builders of a more just, peaceful and hopeful Africa. The Church walks with you, believes in you and entrusts to you the mission of transforming our continent.

“Like the first disciples, *follow Jesus!* Do not be afraid to draw near to Him.” (St. John Paul II, *Message for the 12th World Youth Days*, 1996). As Jesus Christ’s followers, during these Days in Accra, you will have several opportunities to deepen your faith through the celebration of the Eucharist, prayer, teachings, and faith and cultural celebrations.

Beyond all these activities, I invite you to see this gathering as a moment of encounter: an encounter with Christ, an encounter with one another.

May God bless you; may He bless the peoples of West Africa.

Thank you, and God bless you all.