



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO KENYA, UGANDA AND THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC
(25-30 NOVEMBER 2015)

MEETING WITH EVANGELICAL COMMUNITIES

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

Faculty of Evangelical Theology [FATEB], Bangui , Central African Republic
Sunday, 29 November 2015

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am happy to be able to meet you in this Faculty of Evangelical Theology. I thank the Dean of the Faculty and the President of the Evangelical Alliance of Central Africa for their kind words of welcome. With fraternal affection I greet each of you and, through you, all the members of your communities. All of us are here in the service of the risen Lord who assembles us today; and, by virtue of the common baptism we have received, we are sent to proclaim the joy of the Gospel to men and women of this beloved country of Central Africa.

For all too long, your people have experienced troubles and violence, resulting in great suffering. This makes the proclamation of the Gospel all the more necessary and urgent. For it is Christ's own flesh which suffers in his dearest sons and daughters: the poorest of his people, the infirm, the elderly, the abandoned, children without parents or left to themselves without guidance and education. There are also those who have been scarred in soul or body by hatred and violence, those whom war has deprived of everything: work, home and loved ones.

God makes no distinctions between those who suffer. I have often called this the *ecumenism of blood*. All our communities suffer indiscriminately as a result of injustice and the blind hatred unleashed by the devil. Here I wish to express my closeness and solidarity to Pastor Nicholas, whose home was recently ransacked and set on fire, as was the meeting-place of his community.

In these difficult circumstances, the Lord keeps asking us to demonstrate to everyone his tenderness, compassion and mercy. This shared suffering and shared mission are a providential opportunity for us to advance together on the path of unity; they are also an indispensable spiritual aid. How could the Father refuse the grace of unity, albeit still imperfect, to his children who suffer together and, in different situations, join in serving their brothers and sisters?

Dear brothers and sisters, the lack of unity among Christians is a scandal, above all because it is contrary to God's will. It is also a scandal when we consider the hatred and violence which are tearing humanity apart, and the many forms of opposition which the Gospel of Christ encounters. I appreciate the spirit of mutual respect and cooperation existing between the Christians of your country, and I encourage you to continue on this path of common service in charity. It is a witness to Christ which builds up unity.

With increasing intensity and courage, may you add to perseverance and charity, a commitment to prayer and common reflection, as you seek to achieve greater mutual understanding, trust and friendship in view of that full communion for which we firmly hope.

I assure you of my prayerful support along the path of fraternal charity, reconciliation and mercy, a path which is long, yet full of joy and hope.

I ask the Lord Jesus to bless all of you! May he bless your communities, and our Church as well! I ask you to pray for me. Thank you very much.