

REFLECTIONS ON POPE BENEDICT XVI'S MONTHLY INTENTIONS

March 2010

Editor's Note: Apostleship of Prayer receives monthly prayer intentions from Pope Benedict XVI and urges Christians throughout the world to unite in prayer for those intentions. The reflections below seek to illuminate the Holy Father's concerns.

General Intention

World Economy. *That the world economy may be managed according to the principles of justice and equality, taking into account the real needs of peoples, especially the poorest.*



Speaking of last year's global financial collapse, Pope Benedict said "it was precisely from this root of covetousness that the crisis sprang" (General Audience, April 22, 2009). Economic and political solutions can go only so far to fix the economy. What is needed is a spiritual solution to a spiritual problem: prayer.

The Holy Father asks us to pray that the economy be managed with justice and equality, mindful of the "needs of peoples, especially the poorest." It is the poorest who are most forgotten and denied their rights to what is necessary for life - food, shelter, and medical care.

Lent is a good time to pray and give alms. Can we sacrifice something so we can give something more to others?

Can we see all of humanity with the Heart of Jesus, recognizing our solidarity in one family? We pray for the development of a truly Christian world economy. Pope Benedict concluded his third encyclical, *Charity in Truth*, with these words:

"Development needs Christians with their arms raised towards God in prayer... Development requires attention to the spiritual life, a serious consideration of the experiences of trust in God, spiritual fellowship in Christ, reliance upon God's providence and mercy, love, and forgiveness, self-denial, acceptance of others, justice and peace. All this is essential if 'hearts of stone' are to be transformed into 'hearts of flesh,' rendering life on earth 'divine' and thus more worthy of humanity" (Ezekiel 36:26).

Jesus once said, "Man was not made for the Sabbath, but the Sabbath for man." Today we might alter those words to say, "Man was not made for the economy, but the economy for man." In other words, what is primary is the sacred human person made in God's image and likeness.

Let us pray that the economy may serve the good of every person on the face of the earth.

Reflection:

The "root of covetousness" is a spiritual problem that can be overcome only by spiritual means. How will you attack covetousness in your own life?



Reading:

Isaiah 1:10-17 Hear the word of the Lord... Wash yourselves clean! Put away your misdeeds from before my eyes; cease doing evil; learn to do good. Make justice your aim: redress the wronged, hear the orphan's plea, defend the widow.

Mission Intention

Churches in Africa. *That the Churches throughout Africa may be signs and instruments of reconciliation and justice.*



Pope Benedict recently likened Africa to an "immense spiritual lung" breathing faith and hope into a world where faith and hope are in short supply (Homily for the Opening of the Second Special Assembly for Africa, October 2009). But to be truly effective as the standard-bearer of Christ to the world, the African Church must also be an agent of reconciliation and justice on a continent beset with violence, corruption, poverty, and disease.

The countries of Africa have a long history of exploitation by outsiders who have robbed resources, subjugated peoples, and disrupted established ways of life. Much of Africa remains underdeveloped, and like the poor everywhere, African peoples have been badly hurt by the current economic crisis.

The Pope believes that the Churches in Africa can lead the way in helping to stop violence and heal divisions. He asks us to pray this month that the African Churches may be instruments of reconciliation and justice. He asks us to be near to the people of Africa with "active solidarity," for we are one family of God.

Since all violence, corruption, poverty, and disease are the result of sin, the cure too must be spiritual. God's grace is always necessary to help people to know and do the right thing. In his second encyclical, *Spe Salvi*, the Pope reminds us that "God is the author of justice." Only by God's grace can Africa discern and act to bring peace, healing, nourishment, and development.

When the Christ Child's life was threatened, the Holy Family fled to Africa and found refuge there. May the presence of the risen Christ continue to illuminate and sanctify this great continent.

Reflection:

How can you join in "active solidarity" with the people of Africa? Pray that God will guide you to say and to do things that express your sense that we are one human family created in God's image.



Reading:

Matthew 5: 13-16 You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.

**Prayer of the Month**

Father, you have given all peoples one common origin, and your will is to gather them as one family in yourself. Fill the hearts of all with the fire of your love and the desire to ensure justice for all their brothers and sisters. By sharing the good things you give us may we secure justice and equality for every human being, an end to all division, and a human society built on love and peace.

- From the Votive Mass for the Progress of Peoples

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