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Pubblichiamo di seguito le parole che il Santo Padre Benedetto XVI ha pronunciato questa mattina, nel corso della terza Congregazione generale della II Assemblea speciale per l'Africa del Sinodo dei Vescovi, in risposta all'intervento del Patriarca della Chiesa Tewahedo Ortodossa di Etiopia, Sua Santità Abuna Paulos:

● PAROLE DEL SANTO PADRE

Your Holiness,

I thank you wholeheartedly for your thoughtful presentation and for accepting my invitation to take part in the Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops. I am sure that my gratitude and appreciation are shared by all the members of the Assembly.

Your presence bears eloquent witness to the antiquity and rich traditions of the Church in Africa. From apostolic times, among the many people yearning to hear Christ's message of salvation were those coming from Ethiopia (cf. *Acts* 8:26-40). Your people's fidelity to the Gospel continues to be shown not only by their obedience to his law of love, but also, as you have reminded us, by perseverance amid persecution and the supreme sacrifice of martyrdom for the name of Christ.

Your Holiness has recalled that the proclamation of the Gospel cannot be separated from the commitment to build a society which conforms to God's will, respects the blessings of his creation and protects the dignity and innocence of all his children. In Christ we know that reconciliation is possible, justice can prevail, peace can endure! This is the message of hope which we are called to proclaim. This is the promise which the people of Africa long to see fulfilled in our day.

Let us pray, then, that our Churches may draw closer in the unity which is the Holy Spirit's gift, and bear common witness to the hope brought by the Gospel. Let us continue to work for the integral development of all Africa's peoples, strengthening the families which are the bulwark of African society, educating the young who are Africa's future, and contributing to the building of societies marked by honesty, integrity and solidarity. May our deliberations during these weeks help Christ's followers throughout the continent to be convincing examples of righteousness, mercy and peace, and a light to guide the path of coming generations.

Your Holiness, once again I thank you for your presence and your valued reflections. May your participation in this Synod be a blessing for our Churches.

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