



CCEE PLENARY ASSEMBLY

Rome, 23-26 September 2021



H. Em. Card. Philippe OUEDRAOGO

**MESSAGE OF SOLIDARITY FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE SYMPOSIUM
OF EPISCOPAL CONFERENCES OF AFRICA AND MADAGASCAR FOR THE
CELEBRATION OF THE CCEE GOLDEN JUBILEE IN ROME ON SEPTEMBER
23-26, 2021**

Eminences, Excellences, Reverend Fathers
Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Ladies and Gentlemen

Today marks the 50th anniversary of services provided by the **Council of Bishops' Conferences of Europe (CCEE)** here on the continent and beyond. We wish to express heartfelt thanks to your president, Cardinal Angelo BAGNASCO for his kind invitation to this celebration and the opportunity we have been given to speak. In the name of the members of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SCEAM), we wish to express our warmest congratulations.

Your golden jubilee entitled "***CCEE, 50 years of service in Europe, memory and perspectives in the context of 'Fratelli Tutti'***" is celebrated at a time in which the Universal Church is preparing to begin a synodal process of the greatest importance for its history since the Second Vatican Council and the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000: "**For a synodal Church: communion, participation and mission**". The context of this synodal process in various stages, to which Pope Francis invites all those who believe in Christ, is that of a world experiencing profound social, political, economic, environmental and even anthropological and ethical change. It is a historical moment with many uncertainties among which one of the still most significant is COVID 19. These times we are living in could also become very favourable, a *kairos*, in which the prophetic voice of the disciples of Jesus of Nazareth reawaken hope in people's hearts. It is this hope that that the God's Family's Church in Africa, the result of the work of brave missionaries – our fathers in the Faith – have come to share with you, having also just celebrated their golden jubilee in the land of the Martyrs of Uganda in 2019. The pastoral exhortation that SCEAM presented in

closing this Jubilee at the God's Family's Church in Africa is very simple: **"Now this is eternal life, that they should know you, the only true God, and the one whom you sent, Jesus Christ."** (cf. Jn 17,3 ; 10,10). In a world increasingly marked by what Pope Emeritus Benedict rightly called **"the dictatorship of relativism"**, we, the disciples of Christ, have only one mission: to be Christ's witnesses, yesterday, today and forever.

The fact that this living and invigorating experience of Christ continues to mark the life and mission of the Church in Europe and that the authentic voice of its pastors is always searched for by people of conscience, proves the positive impact of its evangelising mission. It is the reason for which we thank the Lord for His blessings and encourage you to keep faith and hope in Him and never give up and despair, even when the wind of the world blows against you. May God bless you abundantly, sustain you and strengthen the unity and communion without which the Church will not know how to make progress (Ecclesia in Africa n° 17)

This jubilee celebration provides us with a solemn opportunity to salute the path that the CCEE and SCEAM have travelled together, addressing the great issues of missionary cooperation, and in particular the delicate and painful matter of migration. We will never forget the prophetic gesture made by Pope Francis who dedicated the whole of the first pastoral visit of his papacy to meeting with the *"petit reste"* of young African migrants "saved from the waters" in Lampedusa on July 8th, 2013. So as to disperse "the dark clouds over a closed world" (*Fratelli tutti*, n° 9sv.) and manage to "envisage and engender an open world" (FT n° 87sv), we are constantly invited to be inspired by the figure of the *Good Samaritan* of which the story is "constantly retold" (FT n° 69sv).

We salute your courage that is also prophetic in bringing alive the memory of the Christian roots of your continent, in view of a better discernment of the current situation. (cf. *Remarques introductives sur l'Assemblée*, <https://www.ccee.eu/ccee>, du 3 septembre 2021).

In view of the Encyclical Letter *Fratelli tutti*, we would like together with you to examine one same missionary horizon; the Church cannot restrict its mission to the private sphere. It cannot and must not remain on the side-lines of building a better world, or fail to awaken the spiritual energy that can contribute to a better society. " If the music of the Gospel ceases to resonate in our very being, we will lose the joy born of compassion, the tender love born of trust, the capacity for reconciliation that has its source in our knowledge that we have been forgiven and sent forth. If the music of the Gospel ceases to sound in our homes, our public squares, our workplaces, our political and financial life, then we will no longer hear the strains that challenge us to defend the dignity of every man and woman ." (FT n° 277).

Dear brother Bishops, distinguished guests, so that the Catholic Church may continue to be “salt and light” (cf. Mt 5, 13-14) for our contemporary society, all of us, pastors and the faithful, must keep alive our Christian hope. Many of our contemporaries are thirsty for the Good News of Redemption and in search of the truth and authentic meaning in their lives. The Holy Catholic Church has what is needed to help them.

I assure you of the fervent prayers of your brothers the Bishops in Africa,