



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE
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BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

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PROMULGAZIONE DELL'ESORTAZIONE APOSTOLICA POST-SINODALE "ECCLESIA IN OCEANIA"

Alle 11.30 di questa mattina, nella Sala Clementina del Palazzo Apostolico Vaticano, il Santo Padre Giovanni Paolo II promulga l'Esortazione Apostolica Post-Sinodale "*Ecclesia in Oceania*".

Pubblichiamo di seguito il discorso che il Santo Padre pronuncia dopo la firma dell'Esortazione Apostolica:

• **DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE**

"Let the heavens rejoice and earth be glad, let the sea and all within it thunder praise" (*Ps* 96:11).

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

1. From the far corners of the world you have come, witnesses to the glorious life which is ours in Christ Jesus, and in particular witnesses to the faith and love of God's People in Oceania. With gratitude for the successful celebration of the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for Oceania we join in the great hymn of praise which rises ceaselessly from the heart of the Church to the Most Holy Trinity.

I would have wished to visit Oceania once again, in order to present the fruits of the Synod's work, the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Oceania*. But it was not to be! Therefore the Pacific comes to the Bishop of Rome, and "with the affection of Christ Jesus" (*Phil* 1:8) I greet you and all whom you represent. In you I see the boundless ocean glimmering in the sun; the Southern Cross shining in the night sky; the islands great and small; the cities and the villages; the beaches and the forests. But most of all I see in you the peoples who are the true wealth of Oceania: the Melanesian, Polynesian and Micronesian peoples in their wonderful array; the Aborigines of Australia; the Maoris of New Zealand; the many immigrant peoples who have made Oceania their home. In the mighty symphony of Oceania we hear as it were "the Lord's voice resounding on the waters, the Lord on the immensity of waters, the voice of the Lord full of power, the voice of the Lord full of splendour" (*Ps* 29:3-4).

2. The Special Assembly was an experience of intense communion, and one of its many graces was that all the Bishops could take part. The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council – and I was one – were marked for ever by

the experience of communion in that event which was without doubt the great grace bestowed on the Church in the twentieth century (cf. *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 57). In the Special Assembly for Oceania, a new generation of Bishops who had not been at the Council could taste something of its extraordinary atmosphere and effect, and thus be better equipped to implement its teaching, as the whole Church must do more boldly than ever as we move into the new millennium. Far from having exhausted its potential, the Second Vatican Council remains the guiding light of the Church's pilgrimage.

Like the Great Jubilee for which it prepared, the Special Assembly was both "a remembrance of the past [and] a prophecy of the future" (*ibid.*, 3). Together we looked back upon the story of evangelization in Oceania, and gave thanks to the Father of all mercies for the magnificent work of the early missionaries, and for the welcome which the peoples of Oceania gave to the Lord Jesus himself, "walking his way, telling his truth and living his life". We heard the story of the remarkable development of the Church in your lands, acknowledging with deep gratitude that it is "God alone who gives the growth" (*1 Cor 3:7*). The Synod rejoiced at the countless signs of holiness and justice present among the peoples of Oceania, a pledge of the springtime of faith for which we yearn and work.

But we recognized too that the many challenges facing the peoples of Oceania at this time are summoning the Church to engage the Pacific peoples and their cultures with renewed vigour and conviction. The Synod heard of economic crises, political instability, corruption, ethnic conflicts, the erosion of traditional forms of social organization, the breakdown of law and order, the threat of global warming and, especially in the wealthier societies, of a genuinely spiritual crisis of meaning which shows itself most clearly in the erosion of respect for human life. Yet the Bishops were in no way daunted by all of this. On the contrary, it became clearer as the Special Assembly went on that the Holy Spirit is calling the Church in Oceania to embark upon the great task of a new evangelization. In that sense the Synod became "a prophecy of the future", and the Bishops felt ever more deeply that they are "servants of the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the hope of the world", that hope of which the recent Tenth Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops spoke so tellingly.

3. Cette nouvelle aventure missionnaire s'enracine dans «la contemplation du visage du Christ», qui est le cœur du riche héritage que l'expérience du grand Jubilé nous a légué (cf. *Novo millennio ineunte*, n. 15). Puisse-t-il y avoir chez tous les baptisés, en tout point de l'Océanie, un grand et nouvel élan de contemplation ! Que les habitants du Pacifique redisent sans cesse: «C'est ta face, Seigneur, que je cherche» (*Ps 26, 8*) ! Qu'ils proclament toujours joyeusement avec l'Évangile : «Nous avons vu le Seigneur» (*Jn 20, 25*)! Des profondeurs de la contemplation jaillit cette spiritualité et cette expérience de communion que les Évêques ont tellement soulignées à l'occasion de l'Assemblée spéciale. Ayant apporté avec eux le riche éventail de leurs expériences et de leurs trésors culturels, ils ont été fortifiés en retour par le lien de la *communio*, au niveau local et universel. Elle fut pour eux source de profond renouvellement et d'encouragement pour l'avenir (cf. *Ecclesia in Oceania*, n. 9). La communion est la matrice de la mission; elle donnera les énergies nécessaires à la nouvelle évangélisation. Puisse l'Église dans vos pays faire preuve d'une ingéniosité et d'un courage toujours plus grands alors qu'elle s'élançait à nouveau dans les profondeurs du Pacifique ! Car le commandement du Seigneur est clair : «*Duc in altum !*» (*Lc 5, 4*).

4. Chers Frères et Sœurs, alors que vous vous engagez sur les flots de l'avenir, vous n'êtes pas seuls. L'Église universelle vous accompagne. Cette «foule immense de témoins» (*Heb 12, 1*), qui constitue la Communion des Saints, vous entoure. Les saints de l'Océanie, reflets de la gloire de Dieu «qui rayonne sur le visage du Christ» (*2 Co 4, 6*), sont proches de vous en ce moment: saint Pierre Chanel, les bienheureux Diego Luis de San Vitores, Pedro Calungsod, Giovanni Mazzuconi, Mary MacKillop et Peter To Rot. Qu'ils ne cessent jamais d'intercéder pour les peuples parmi lesquels ils ont vécu et pour lesquels ils sont morts, brûlants d'amour ! Au cœur de la Communion des Saints se trouve la Mère du Christ, *Stella Maris*, si vénérée par les peuples du Pacifique. Je lui confie tout spécialement l'Exhortation apostolique post-synodale *Ecclesia in Oceania*. Que Marie, Secours des chrétiens et Reine de la Paix, et que tous les saints vous soutiennent, vous, Évêques, prêtres, religieux et fidèles laïcs, au moment où vous mettrez en œuvre les enseignements et les indications de ce document dans les divers contextes de vos vastes territoires. En gage de grâce et de paix dans le Fils de Dieu, «qui tient les sept étoiles dans sa main droite» (*Ap 2, 1*), je vous accorde une affectueuse Bénédiction apostolique.

