

# The Church in Africa:

## Spiritually Rich, but Desperately Poor

### United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Ad Hoc Committee for the Church in Africa

Spiritually Rich:

- **The Church in Africa nearly tripled in size during the papacy of John Paul II, growing from 55 million to 144 million members; Catholics make up about 17% of the African population.**

- **The number of priests in Africa has increased by 73 percent during the past 25 years.**

- **Africa has 488 dioceses, more than 10,000 parishes and 75,000 missions.**



- **Catholic schools in Africa include: 11,538 kindergartens with 1 million children; 31,586 primary schools with 11.6 million students; 8,229 middle and high schools with 2.6-million pupils.**

- **African seminarians make up 20% of the global total.**

*“The critical challenges and enormous potential facing Africa today serve as the opportunity for—and test of—our mutual solidarity. Our response to this vocation of solidarity with the Church and peoples of Africa enables us to express love ‘in deed and in truth’ (1 John 3:18), a love that creates no borders and sets no limits to what might be accomplished together in Christ.”*

—U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops,  
*A Call to Solidarity with Africa* (2001)

Desperately Poor:

- **70% of Africans live on less than \$2 per day; more than 40% live on less than \$1. This poverty cripples the ability of the Church in Africa to raise sufficient funds for pastoral needs from the faithful.**

- **Although vocations to the priesthood are plentiful in Africa, many countries report having to turn away seminarians due to lack of space and funding for seminaries.**



- **More than 40 million children—about half—are not receiving a primary education. As recognized recently by the UN, Catholic schools play a vital role in many developing nations, with the Church’s commitment to education in Africa singled out for praise. Just over 15 million children are enrolled in Catholic schools. The schools require support and more schools need to be established.**

- **20% of Africans live in countries severely disrupted by conflict. The Church is playing a growing pastoral role in peacebuilding. But the results of conflict are manifold. In Sudan, for instance, decades of war left so much destruction that even chalices and vestments for celebrating Mass are in short supply.**



**Please give generously to the U.S. Bishops’ Pastoral Solidarity Fund for the Church in Africa.**

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