

From the post-synodal apostolic exhortation, *Africae Munus*, of Pope Benedict XVI to the bishops, clergy, consecrated persons and the lay faithful on the church in Africa in service to reconciliation, justice and peace, 19 November 2011

Islam

94. The Synod Fathers highlighted the complexity of the Muslim presence on the African continent. In some countries, good relations exist between Christians and Muslims; in others, the local Christians are merely second-class citizens, and Catholics from abroad, religious and lay, have difficulty obtaining visas and residence permits; in some, there is insufficient distinction between the religious and political spheres, while in others, finally, there is a climate of hostility. I call upon the Church, in every situation, to persist in esteem for Muslims, who “worship God who is one, living and subsistent; merciful and almighty, the creator of heaven and earth, who has also spoken to humanity.” If all of us who believe in God desire to promote reconciliation, justice and peace, we must work together to banish every form of discrimination, intolerance and religious fundamentalism. In her social apostolate, the Church does not make religious distinctions. She comes to the help of those in need, be they Christian, Muslim or animist. In this way she bears witness to the love of God, creator of all, and she invites the followers of other religions to demonstrate respect and to practise reciprocity in a spirit of esteem. I ask the whole Church, through patient dialogue with Muslims, to seek juridical and practical recognition of religious freedom, so that every citizen in Africa may enjoy not only the right to choose his religion freely and to engage in worship, but also the right to freedom of conscience. Religious freedom is the road to peace.