

During the homily of today's Eucharistic Celebration, Fr. Francesco Pierli invited us to adopt an attitude of humble listening, saying that we are all pilgrims on this "continent of hope," which is brimming over with vitality and requires new and creative presences and proposals. This listening is obligatory because discernment is not possible if one is not attentive to the presence and inspirations of the Spirit, who has been dwelling for millennia in this sacred land.

Fr. Pierli spent the entire morning with us and thanks to his wisdom and profound knowledge of this continent he was able to cast light on our reflections concerning *the response the Church must make to the needs of Africa*. A Comboni priest, Fr. Pierli arrived in Africa in 1971, armed with a degree in dogmatic theology. When his Congregation set up a seminary in Uganda, he was the institute's first formator. He returned to Europe when he was elected Superior General of his Congregation but after finishing his term of office he came back to Africa and was asked to teach in Nairobi. Fr. Pierli also founded a Social Ministry Institute and currently serves as its director. He is a good friend and collaborator of the Daughters of St. Paul.



Taking as his point of the departure the diagrams we drew up yesterday, and considering them in the light of the two post-synodal apostolic exhortations, *Ecclesia in Africa* (1995) and *Africae Munus* (2011), our expert guided us in a reflection on *African subjectivity at the beginning of the Third Millennium*—a subjectivity that began to emerge across the continent with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. When that barrier collapsed, the bi-polar world dominated by Washington and Moscow also crumbled and the African people initiated a stage of progressive self-determination, choosing their own leaders. A similar process is now beginning in the Arab world.

In the opinion of Fr. Pierli, *Africa Munus* is particularly striking for its treatment of ministries (apostolic contexts) through which African subjectivity with regard to *reconciliation, justice, peace, the integrity of creation, education, health and social communications* can clearly emerge and "infect" the world's other continents. Fr. Pierli's insights confirmed a number of priorities that had already emerged in our own work in these days, namely, to pervade Africa with the Word of God; to welcome the challenge of forming the African people, above all in the civic sphere; to help them embrace pluralism and solidarity in their dialogue with one another; to use the media to spread the Gospel, and to form the people to reconciliation, justice and peace—values that are desperately needed on this continent today.



We certainly now have a lot of "threads" to work with! In thanking Fr. Pierli for his valuable contribution to our work, Sr. Antonietta reaffirmed his suggestions in her summary of the three most urgent priorities facing the Pauline mission in Africa-Madagascar: *to reorganize our book centers* so that they will increasingly be centers of light, dialogue and encounter; *to expand our Bible ministry*, uniting to the meritorious work of producing and diffusing the divine Word the effort to provide the people with animations so that they will learn to nourish themselves on the Scriptures; *to provide our young professed sisters with the accompaniment they need* so that they will develop a solid spirituality and the human maturity necessary to become protagonists in the societal changes taking place across the continent.

Today's input helped us re-examine our diagrams and identify what we think are the most urgent responses the Church must make to the needs of Africa so as to support these priorities with our specific apostolate. This has helped us take a big step forward toward formulating our *continental objective*.

Tomorrow we will be taking a break in our work, so you will not be receiving a news flash. However, we'll be in touch with you again on Sunday, the Feast of Pentecost.