

**REMARKS OF HIS EXCELLENCY ARCHBISHOP CHRISTOPHE PIERRE  
APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 25TH ANNUAL PILGRIMAGE TO THE  
CHAPEL OF OUR MOTHER OF AFRICA  
NATIONAL BLACK CATHOLIC CONGRESS  
NATIONAL SHRINE OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION  
WASHINGTON, DC  
SEPTEMBER 17, 2022**

Dear Bishop Campbell, Dear Friends in Christ,

It is a great pleasure and honor for me to have received your kind invitation to join with you for this Silver Jubilee Mass for the pilgrimage of the National Black Catholic Congress to the beautiful Chapel of Our Mother of Africa here at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. We are especially grateful to all the faithful who over the years have made this outstanding project possible. A special word of thanks must be given to Valerie Washington and her associates for her thoughtful invite and for all she has done to make this day such a joyful experience.

How privileged we all feel to be embraced by the loving protection of the Mother of God and to have the opportunity to share in the God-given mission based on our baptismal commitment to witness and proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ. We are the Body of Christ in the world today. Our presence enriches the Church by evangelizing African Americans within and outside the Church. As full members of that Church and society we enhance the physical and spiritual well-being of African Americans and we collaborate with many Roman Catholic organizations and support our brothers and sisters in their noble endeavors to bring others closer to Christ.

As we come together to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the pilgrimage to this magnificent Chapel dedicated to Our Lady of Africa, may we be drawn closer in faith to each other through her motherly intercession, and may the Chapel be seen as the expression of the values, hopes, dreams, aspirations, and history of the African American Catholic people.

My friends, as you have persevered through many years of difficulties in your history to break through the darkness, we encourage you to continue on your path into the light and to be a continual source of hope for those who follow in your footsteps.

May the amazing grace that has brought us thus far through the intercession of Mary, our Mother and our Queen, shed its powerful, yet gentle radiance upon all of us, our children and families, our homes and our beloved country.

I would like to conclude with the encouraging words of our Holy Father:

*"We all love her as Mother. We are not orphans; we have a Mother in heaven who is the Holy Mother of God...she teaches us the virtue of waiting, even when everything seems to lack meaning; she is ever confident in the mystery of God, even when he seems to have eclipsed himself due to the evil in the world. In the most difficult moments, may Mary, the Mother that Jesus gave to all of us, always support*

*our steps, may she always say to our hearts: 'Arise! Look forward, look to the horizon', because she is the Mother of Hope." (General Audience, 10 May 2017)*

Mary, Mother of Africa, smile upon us today and hold us always in your loving embrace.