



# The Holy See

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***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI  
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE ANNUAL MEETING  
OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE BOARD  
OF THE AUTONOMOUS PONTIFICAL FOUNDATION  
"POPULORUM PROGRESSIO" FOR LATIN AMERICA  
AND THE CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES***

Consistory Hall

Thursday, 14 June 2007

*Dear Brothers in the Episcopate,  
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

I am very pleased to welcome and greet with affection the members of the Administrative Board of the "Populorum Progressio" Foundation for Latin America and the Caribbean Countries on the occasion of the annual meeting. This year we are celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Encyclical of my Predecessor Paul VI which gave the Foundation its name.

I would like to thank Archbishop Paul Josef Cordes, the President, for his kind words on behalf of you all. I am also grateful for the presence of Cardinal Juan Íñiguez Sandoval and of various Bishops who come from the "Continent of Hope", some of whom I was able to greet on my recent [Apostolic Visit to Brazil](#).

I likewise greet the representatives of the Italian Bishops' Conference, who contribute so generously to making St Ignatius of Antioch's words: the Church of Rome "presides in charity" (*Epistula ad Romanos*, I, 1), come true. I am especially grateful to all those who help us to carry out this most important mission.

Lastly, I would like to greet the collaborators of the Pontifical Council "Cor Unum" who are also attending this meeting with the Successor of Peter. Thank you for your constant work for the poorest people.

Ever since my beloved Predecessor John Paul II established the "Populorum Progressio" Foundation 15 years ago and put the Pontifical Council "Cor Unum" in charge of it, the Foundation has been dedicated to promoting the Church's mission, supporting in particular projects for the indigenous peoples, the *campesinos* and the African Americans of the Latin American and Caribbean Countries.

In establishing this Foundation, the Pope had in mind the people whose ancestral customs are threatened by a post-modern culture and who are seeing the destruction of their traditions which are so open to accepting the truth of the Gospel.

The Foundation is the fruit of the great sensitivity that John Paul II showed to the men and women in our society who suffer most. This endeavour, embarked upon 15 years ago, must continue in accordance with the principles that have marked its commitment to promote the dignity of every human being and the fight against poverty.

Here, I would like to underline two characteristics of the Foundation.

In the first place, the development of peoples must maintain as a pastoral principle a global and anthropological vision of the human person. Article 2 of the Foundation's Statutes describes this aspect as "complete development". In this regard, Pope Paul VI said in his Encyclical, defining the concept: "What must be aimed at is complete humanism. And what is that if not the fully-rounded development of the whole man and of all men? A humanism closed in on itself, and not open to the values of the spirit and to God who is their source, could achieve apparent success.... There is no true humanism but that which is open to the Absolute and is conscious of a vocation which gives human life its true meaning" (n. 42).

This complete development takes into account the social and material aspects of life, such as the proclamation of faith which gives man's being full meaning. Man's true poverty is often the lack of hope and the absence of a Father who gives meaning to human existence itself: "*Often the deepest cause of suffering is the very absence of God*" (*Deus Caritas Est*, n. 31c).

The second characteristic is the exemplarity of the Foundation's working method, a model for every aid structure. The projects are studied by an Administrative Board that consists of Bishops from different regions of Latin America who evaluate them. Thus, the decisions are taken by those who are familiar with the problems of those people and their material needs.

Likewise, this avoids on the one hand a certain paternalism, which is always humiliating for the poor and dampens their initiative; and on the other, it means that the total sum of the allocated funds reaches the neediest, without being wasted on unwieldy bureaucratic processes.

As I said on my recent Pastoral Visit to Aparecida, the Church in these nations is facing enormous

challenges. At the same time, however, she is the "Church of Hope", which feels the need to fight for the dignity of every person and for true justice, and against the wretched condition of our fellow human beings.

Latin America is a part of the world, rich in natural resources, where differences in the standard of living must give way to this spirit of sharing goods, as can be seen in the conversion and subsequent attitude of Zacchaeus, the publican of the Gospel: "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold" (Lk 19: 8).

In the face of secularization, the proliferation of sects and the poverty of so many of our brethren, it is urgently necessary to form communities united in faith like the Holy Family of Nazareth, where the joyful witness of those who have encountered the Lord may be the light that illumines those in search of a more dignified life.

I entrust the work of this Pontifical Council "Cor Unum" and of the "Populorum Progressio" Foundation to the intercession of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Patroness of all America. May she help you and guide you always!

As an expression of these warm good wishes, I affectionately impart my Apostolic Blessing to you all, to your relatives and to your collaborators.

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