



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE BISHOPS OF THE EAST II REGION
OF THE BRAZILIAN BISHOPS' CONFERENCE
ON THEIR "AD LIMINA" VISIT**

Consistory Hall

Saturday, 19 June 2010

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate,

"To those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 2-3). With these words I welcome you all, beloved Pastors of the East ii Region who are making your *ad limina* visit, and I greet you with deep affection in the knowledge of the collegial ties that unite the Pope with the Bishops in the bond of unity, charity and peace. I thank Archbishop Walmor for his kind words expressing your sentiments of homage to the See of Peter and describing the challenges and problems that call for your commitment for the good of the flock that God has entrusted to you in the States of Espírito Santo and Minas Gerais.

I see that you love your dioceses profoundly and I too share deeply in your love, accompanying you with prayers and apostolic concern. Ours is a beautiful history whose beginning is tangible in the Bulls issued by the Holy Father for episcopal ordination and in that "Here I am" spoken by each Bishop at the beginning of the rite of his consecration and consequent entry into the College of Bishops. You become members of the College "through episcopal consecration and hierarchical communion with the head of the College and its members" (Preliminary Explanatory Note annexed to the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, n. 2), likewise becoming successors of the Apostles with the threefold role of teaching, sanctifying and governing the People of God.

As teachers and doctors of faith, your mission is to teach with daring the truth that must be believed and lived out, presenting it in an authentic manner. As I said to you at Aparecida, "The

Church has the great task of guarding and nourishing the faith of the People of God, and reminding the faithful... that, by virtue of their Baptism, they are called to be disciples and missionaries of Jesus Christ" (*Address at the Opening Session of the Fifth General Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops' Conferences*, 13 May 2007, n. 3). Help the faithful entrusted to your pastoral care, therefore, to discover the joy of faith, the joy of being personally loved by God who gave his Son for our salvation. As you know well, believing consists above all in abandoning oneself to this God who knows and loves us personally, accepting the Truth that he revealed in Jesus Christ with the attitude that leads us to have trust in him as one who reveals the Father. Dear Brothers, have great trust in grace and may you be able to imbue your people with this trust so that the faith may always be preserved, defended and passed on in its purity and integrity.

As stewards of the supreme priesthood, you must ensure that the Liturgy is truly an epiphany of the mystery, that is, an expression of the genuine nature of the Church which actively offers worship to God through Christ in the Holy Spirit. Of all the duties of your ministry, "that of celebrating the Eucharist is the most compelling and important", and you have the duty of "ensuring that the faithful have access to the Lord's table, especially on Sunday, which, as I just mentioned, is the day on which the Church, the community and family of the children of God, rediscovers her specific Christian identity around her own priests" (John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Gregis*, n. 37). The task of sanctifying that you have received obliges you in addition to be promoters and animators of prayer in the human city, often chaotic, noisy and forgetful of God: you must create places and opportunities for prayer where in silence, in listening to God, in personal and community prayer, the person can encounter and have a living experience of Jesus Christ who reveals the authentic Face of the Father. Parishes and shrines, areas of education and suffering and families must become places of communion with the Lord.

Lastly, as guides of the Christian people, you must encourage the participation of all the faithful in building the Church, in governing with the heart of a humble servant and an affectionate Pastor, aspiring to the glory of God and the salvation of souls. By virtue of the task of governance the Bishop is also called to judge and discipline the life of the People of God entrusted to his pastoral care through laws, directives and suggestions, as the universal discipline of the Church prescribes. This right and duty is very important if the diocesan community is to remain inwardly united and to walk in sincere communion of faith, love and discipline with the Bishop of Rome and with the whole Church. Therefore do not tire of nourishing the faithful with the sense of belonging to the Church and the joy of fraternal communion.

However, the Bishop's governance will be pastorally effective only if "it rests on a moral authority bestowed by his life of holiness. This is what will dispose hearts to accept the Gospel that the Bishop proclaims in his Church, as well as the rules which he lays down for the good of the People of God" (*ibid.*, n. 43). Consequently, moulded from within by the Holy Spirit, may each one of you become "all things to all men" (cf. 1 Cor 9: 22), proposing the truth of the faith, celebrating the

sacraments of our sanctification and witnessing to the Lord's charity. Accept with an open heart all who knock at your door: advise them, comfort them and support them on God's path, seeking to guide them all toward that unity of faith and love of which, by the Lord's will, you must be the principal and visible foundation in your dioceses (cf. Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, n. 23).

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate, as I conclude our meeting I would like to renew to each one of you my sentiments of gratitude for the service you offer to the Church with keen dedication and love. Through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, "a model of that motherly love with which all who join in the Church's apostolic mission for the regeneration of mankind should be animated" (*ibid.*, n. 65), I invoke Christ, the Eternal High Priest, that he may grant to your ministry an abundance of gifts and heavenly consolations and I impart to you a special Apostolic Blessing, which I extend to the priests and deacons, to the consecrated men and women, to the seminarians and lay faithful of your communities.

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