



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE BENEDICT XVI
TO THE SECOND GROUP OF BISHOPS OF COLOMBIA
ON THEIR AD LIMINA VISIT***

*Consistory Hall, Apostolic Palace of Castel Gandolfo
Monday, 10 September 2012*

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate,

1. With deep joy I cordially welcome you to this meeting of communion with the Bishop of Rome and Head of the Episcopal College. I am grateful for the courteous words of Archbishop Ricardo Tobón Restrepo of Medellín, expressing the affection of the bishops, priests, deacons, religious communities and lay faithful of Colombia. He also gave me a general outline of the pastoral task that is being carried out in your particular Churches, on pilgrimage amid the persecutions of the world and the consolations of God (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 8).

2. Your visit to the tombs of the Princes of the Apostles, as you know well, is an important moment for the life of the ecclesiastical circumscriptions of which you are Pastors, because it consolidates the bonds of faith and communion that unite you to the Successor of St Peter and to the whole body of the Church. For the Pope too it is a deeply significant occasion, since through it he expresses his concern for all the Churches. May your presence in Rome also be an opportunity to consolidate your effective and affective unity with the Pastor of the universal Church and also among yourselves, so that the ideal with which the ecclesial community has identified since it came into being, to be “of one heart and soul”, (Acts 4:32) may be positively intensified and strengthened in all the faithful.

3. Colombia’s history is indelibly marked by the deep Catholic faith of its people and by its love for the Eucharist, its devotion to the Virgin Mary and the witness of charity borne by its eminent Pastors and lay people. The proclamation of the Gospel has borne fruit among you resulting in abundant vocations to the priesthood and to the consecrated life, in the readiness shown to

undertake the mission *ad gentes*, and in the increase in apostolic movements, as well as the pastoral vitality of the parish communities. Further, you yourselves have also noted the devastating effects of the spreading secularization. It strongly influences the way of life and disrupts the scale of values that people have, undermining the very foundations of the Catholic faith, of marriage, of the family and of Christian morals. In this regard the tireless defence and promotion of the family institution continues to be a pastoral priority for you. I therefore ask you not to abate your efforts and to continue to proclaim the integral truth of the family founded on marriage as “a domestic Church and a sanctuary of life” (*Address at the conclusion of the Prayer Meeting of the Fifth World Meeting of Families*, Valencia, 8 July 2006).

4. The Global Plan (2012-2020) of the Bishops’ Conference of Colombia outlines as a general goal “to promote processes of new evangelization which train missionary disciples, enliven ecclesial communion and influence society through the values of the Gospel” (cf. n. 5.1). I accompany this proposal with my prayers upon which I have already had the opportunity to comment at the opening the Fifth General Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops’ Conferences in Aparecida. On that occasion I asked God that in putting it into practice the ministers of his Church might not tire of identifying with Christ the Good Shepherd’s own sentiments by reaching out to everyone and treating them with his same compassion, to offer them the light of his word. Thus, the dynamism of inner renewal will help your compatriots to revitalize their love for the Lord, the source that can unfold paths that instil steadfast hope in them so that they may live the faith with joy and responsibility, spreading it in every walk of life (cf. *Inaugural Address*, n. 2).

5. In a fatherly spirit dedicate the best of your ministry to the priests, deacons and religious in your care. Pay them the attention that their spiritual, intellectual and material life requires, so that they may carry out their ministry faithfully and fruitfully. And, if necessary, do not hesitate to give them appropriate, clear and charitable correction and guidance. However, be for them above all a model of life and dedication to the mission received from Christ. And do not cease to give priority to nurturing vocations and to the initial formation of candidates to holy Orders or to the religious life. Help them to discern God’s true call so that they may respond to it with generosity and upright intentions. In this regard, it is fitting that in obedience to the instructions of the Magisterium you review the content and methods of formation, in order that they may meet the challenges of the present time and the urgent needs of the People of God. It is likewise important to encourage a correct youth apostolate, through which the young people may clearly perceive that Christ is seeking them and wishes to offer them his friendship (cf. Jn 15:13-15). He gave his life so that they might have life in abundance, so that their hearts would not be weighed down by mediocrity or by proposals that end in emptiness and sorrow. He wishes to help all those who have the future before them to achieve their noblest aspirations so that they may make society fruitful, enabling it to live out faith joyfully and responsibility, concerned to protect the environment ordered to progress and real solidarity.

6. Despite certain encouraging signs, violence continues to bring sorrow, loneliness, death and

injustice to many brothers and sisters in Colombia. As I recognize and thank you for the pastoral mission which you carry out all too often in places fraught with problems and danger on behalf of so many people unjustly suffering in your beloved country, I encourage you to continue to help protect human life and to foster peace. To this end may you find inspiration in the example of Our Saviour and humbly beg him for his grace. Sow the Gospel and harvest reconciliation, knowing that wherever Christ goes harmony makes headway, hatred gives way to forgiveness and rivalry turns into brotherhood.

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate, as I assure you once again of my closeness and good wishes, I entrust each one of you to the motherly protection of Mary Most Holy, under her title as Nuestra Señora del Rosario de Chiquinquirá [Our Lady of the Rosary of Chiquinquirá]. May she intercede for the ordained ministers, the men and women religious, seminarians, catechists and faithful of each one of your archdioceses and dioceses, increasing in all of them the desire to love and serve her divine Son. I wholeheartedly impart to you all an affectionate Apostolic Blessing, as a pledge of abundant heavenly favours.