



The Holy See

LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS ON THE 500th ANNIVERSARY OF THE FIRST MASS IN CHILE

*To His Most Reverend Excellency
Msgr Bernardo Bastres Florence,
SDB Bishop of Punta Arenas*

Dear Brother,

I cordially greet you, as well as all the other brother bishops, priests, religious and lay faithful of all the dioceses of Chile, as they commemorate the celebration of the first Eucharist on Chilean territory this coming 11 November. This is a historic date, not only for the diocese of Punta Arenas, but for the entire Catholic Church in Chile, because 500 years ago, on 11 November 1520, Divine Providence willed that the sacrifice of Holy Mass be offered for the first time in those lands, in the Cerro Monte Cruz, in the Strait of Magellan, by the priest Pedro de Valderrama, chaplain of the expedition of Ferdinand Magellan.

It is above all from the Eucharist, as the [Second Vatican Council](#) reminds us, that “as from a font, grace is poured forth upon us; and the sanctification of men in Christ and the glorification of God... is achieved” (Constitution [Sacrosanctum Concilium](#), 10). Thus, in this fifth centenary we can rightly say, as the motto of the diocese of Punta Arenas states, that “God entered from the South”, because that first Mass celebrated with faith, in the simplicity of an expedition in a then unknown land, initiated the Church that continues to carry out her pilgrimage in this beloved nation.

As a particular Church you have long prepared for this special date. But the pandemic, which is affecting the whole world, and is a cause of suffering and death for millions of our brothers and sisters, prevents you from celebrating the 500th anniversary of the first Eucharist with large-scale

liturgical acts, as you would have wished to do. However, despite this limitation, there is no obstacle that can silence the gratitude that flows from the hearts of all of you, sons and daughters of the pilgrim Church in Chile, who with faith and love renew your dedication to the Lord, in the sure hope that he will continue to accompany your journey throughout history. I encourage you to live the celebration of the Eucharistic Mystery, which unites us to Jesus, with a spirit of adoration and thanksgiving to the Lord, because it is for us the principle of new life and unity, that spurs us to grow in fraternal service to the poorest and most disinherited of our society.

I spiritually join all of you, dear pastors and faithful of the holy People of God, in thanking the Lord who in the Eucharist continues to make Himself the “bread” that satisfies the deepest hunger of every man and woman, gathering everyone in his love to live a brotherhood that is in solidarity and effective, that does not exclude, that does not oppress, that does not ignore.

May Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Model of the Church and Help of Christians, teach you to trust in the Lord and to do his will, in love and in justice, in order to witness to the world the joy of the Gospel.

I accompany you with remembrance in prayer, and while I invoke the protection of the Mother of God on the beloved Church in Chile, I heartily impart to you the Apostolic Blessing.

And please do not forget to pray for me.

Fraternally,

Francis

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 9 November 2020

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