



The Holy See

*VIDEO-MESSAGE OF POPE FRANCIS
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE PILGRIMAGE-MEETING
AT THE SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE
[MEXICO CITY, 16-19 NOVEMBER 2013]*

Saturday, 16 November 2013

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I wish to extend my heartfelt greetings to all of you who are taking part in this pilgrimage-meeting organized by the [Pontifical Commission for Latin America](#), under the protection of Our Lady of Guadalupe. In addition to conveying my affection, my closeness and my desire to be with you, I also wish briefly to share a few thoughts as a contribution to your meeting.

Aparecida proposes putting the Church in a permanent state of mission, carrying out acts of a missionary nature, within the broader context of a common mission: that all of the regular activities of the particular Churches may have a missionary character. And this in the certainty that missionary outreach, more than one activity among others, is a paradigm; that is, it is the paradigm for all pastoral work.

The Church's intimacy with Jesus is an itinerant intimacy, it presumes that we step out of ourselves, that we walk and sow again and again, in an ever wider radius. The Lord said, "Let us go to the nearby villages to preach, for this is why I have come". It is vital for the Church not to close in on herself, not to feel satisfied and secure with what she has achieved. If this were to happen the Church would fall ill, ill of an imaginary abundance, of superfluous abundance; in a certain way, she would "get indigestion" and be weakened. We need to go forth from our own communities and be bold enough to go to the existential outskirts that need to feel the closeness of God. He abandons no one, and he always shows his unfailing tenderness and mercy; this, therefore, is what we need to take to all people.

A second point: the goal of all pastoral work is always oriented by the missionary impetus to reach out to all, without exception, keeping carefully in mind the circumstances of each person. We must reach out to everyone and we will share the joy of having encountered Christ. It is not a matter of going out as someone who imposes a new obligation, as someone who merely reproaches or laments what he considers imperfect or insufficient. The missionary task demands much patience, much patience; to tend the grain and not to feel annoyed by the presence of the weeds. It also knows how to present the Christian message calmly and gradually with the scent of the Gospel, as the Lord did. It knows how to give pride of place to what is essential and most necessary; that is, the beauty of the love of God that speaks to us in the Crucified and Risen Christ. On the other hand, it must strive to be creative in its methods, we cannot be limited by the commonplace of "this is how it has always been done."

Third: the one who leads the pastoral life of the particular Church is the Bishop, and he does this as a shepherd who knows his sheep by name, who guides them with closeness, tenderness and patience, by effectively manifesting the motherhood of the Church and the mercy of God. The attitude of the true shepherd is not that of a prince or a mere functionary whose attention is focused primarily on discipline, rules and organization. This always leads to a pastoral ministry that is remote from the people and incapable of fostering and attaining an encounter with Christ and with one's brethren. The people of God entrusted to the Bishop need him to keep watch over it, to attend above all to what keeps it united and fosters hope in hearts. The Bishop needs to be able to discern and not to smother the breath of the Holy Spirit who blows where he wills for the good of the Church and her mission in the world.

Fourth: the aforesaid disposition of the Bishop must be deeply shared by those who are actively involved in pastoral life, especially priests. The temptation to clericalism, which greatly harms the Church in Latin America, is an obstacle to the development of Christian maturity and responsibility in a large section of the laity. Clericalism involves a self-referential attitude, implying a group mentality that weakens the impetus directed at an encounter with the Lord, who makes us his disciples, and our outreach to men who await the proclamation of the Gospel. Therefore, I think it is important, even urgent, to form ministers who are capable of closeness, of encounter, who know how to move peoples' hearts, to walk with them, to enter into dialogue with their hopes and fears. The Bishops cannot delegate this work. They should engage it as a fundamental aspect of the life of the Church, sparing no effort, care and support. Furthermore, a good formation requires solid and lasting structures that prepare them to face the challenges of our time and to carry the light of the Gospel to the various situations that priests, consecrated men and women, and lay faithful will encounter in their apostolate. Today's culture demands a serious, thorough formation. And I wonder if we have a sufficient capacity for self-criticism to assess the results of very small seminaries suffering from a shortage of adequately trained personnel.

I want to dedicate a few words to the consecrated life. Consecrated life is a leaven in the Church. A leaven of what the Lord wants, a leaven that makes the Church grow toward the final

manifestation of Christ Jesus. I ask consecrated men and women to be faithful to the charism they have received; I ask that in their service of the hierarchical Holy Mother Church, they do not allow the grace which the Holy Spirit gave to their founders, and which they must hand on in its entirety, to fade. And this is the great prophetic gift of consecrated men and women, that charism they received for the good of the Church. Go forward in creative fidelity to the charism you have received in order to serve the Church.

Dear brothers and sisters, thank you very much for what you do for this continent-wide mission. Remember that you have been baptised, that you have been transformed into the Lord's disciples. But every disciple is also a missionary. Benedict XVI said they are two sides to the same coin. I beg you, as your father and brother in Jesus Christ, to take care of the faith you received in Baptism. And, like the mother and grandmother of Timothy, hand on the faith to your children and grandchildren, and not only to them. This treasure of faith is not given for our own personal use. It is meant to be given, to be handed on, and in this way it grows. Make the name of Jesus known. If you do this, do not be amazed if the *roses of Castille* bloom in the dead of winter. For you know, we and Jesus have the same Mother!