



The Holy See

***VIDEO-MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO THE PEOPLE OF RIO DE JANEIRO
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 450th ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING
OF THE CITY OF SÃO SEBASTIÃO DI RIO DE JANEIRO***

Thursday, 1st January 2015 [\[Multimedia\]](#)

Dear Brazilian people,

It is with great joy that I am addressing you, on the New Year's Eve that will signal the start of commemorations of the 450 years of the foundation of the city of São Sebastião do Rio de Janeiro, to greet, on such a happy occasion, the beloved Carioca people, who welcomed me with open arms on the occasion of the [2013 World Youth Day](#), and to inaugurate the new lighting system of the statue of Christ, as Blessed Pope Paul VI did 50 years ago, symbolizing the light that the Lord wants to turn on in our lives.

Four hundred fifty years are already a venerable history; the history of a brave and joyful people who have never let difficulties discourage them, according to the example of their Patron Saint, the Roman martyr, St Sebastian, who even after being pierced by arrows and set to die, did not cease to bear witness to Christ for his contemporaries; the history of a city which, from its very birth has been marked by faith. Dear Carioca people: "Trust in [God], and he will help you; make your ways straight, and hope in him. You who fear the Lord, wait for his mercy" (Sir 2:6-7)!

Today, if we could place ourselves in the perspective of Christ the Redeemer, who from atop Corcovado dominates the geography of the city, what would catch our eyes? First, undoubtedly, the natural beauty that justifies its nickname, "the Marvelous City"; but it is undeniable that, from high upon the Corcovado, we would also perceive the contradictions which mar this beauty. On the one hand, the contrast generated by great social inequalities: opulence and poverty, injustice, violence.... On the other, we have those that we could call invisible cities, groups or human territories with special cultural characteristics. At times it seems that different cities exist, whose coexistence is not always easy in a multicultural and complex reality. But, in view of this image, we must not lose hope! God lives in the city! Jesus, the Redeemer, does not ignore the needs and sufferings of those who are here on earth! His open arms call us to overcome these divisions and

to build a united city from solidarity, justice and peace.

What would be the path to follow? We cannot stand “with our arms crossed”, but instead we must open our arms, like Christ the Redeemer. Thus, the path begins with constructive dialogue. In fact, “between selfish indifference and violent protest there is always another possible option: that of dialogue. Dialogue between generations, dialogue within the people, because we are all that people” (*Address to Brazilian leaders, 27 July 2013*). In this sense, one must recognize that, independent of one’s educational level or wealth, all people have something to contribute to the building of a fair and fraternal civilization. In a practical way, I believe that everyone can learn a lot from the example of generosity and solidarity of the simplest people; that generous wisdom of knowing “to add more water to the beans”, which our world needs so much.

Dear friends, I am certain that the marvelous city has much to offer to Brazil and to the world. Therefore, in switching on the lights of Corcovado, I make my own the words spoken by Blessed Pope Paul VI on 1 January 1965: that “this light, illuminating the city of Rio de Janeiro, may spread throughout Brazil” (Paul VI, *Insegnamenti*, III).

Thus, placing these vows at the feet of *Nossa Senhora Aparecida* and thanking Cardinal Orani Tempesta for the opportunity to address this message to you, I congratulate all the Carioca and Brazilian people on this “anniversary feast”, and ask you to please pray for me. Wishing everyone a happy 2015 and to each one I convey my Apostolic Blessing.