



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

TO THE BISHOPS OF URUGUAY ON THEIR "AD LIMINA" VISIT 26 May 1979 *Venerable Brothers*, Your presence reminds me of the message which, at the beginning of my pontificate, I addressed to you on the occasion of the first centenary of the foundation of the ecclesiastical hierarchy in your country. I felt immensely pleased that an event of such importance for the religious history of your land should have its final celebration on the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, with a ceremony that culminated at the foot of the image of the Virgin of the Thirty-Three.

Today, seeing you here on your visit *ad limina Apostolorum*—and I feel present also the other Brothers in the Episcopate who will likewise come to *visit Peter*—I realize deeply that my union with you is becoming stronger: a strength that finds its perennial fruitfulness in the plan according to which Christ willed to construct his Church on Peter, with the mandate of strengthening his brothers, making his mission with them the unity of the Apostolic College. It is a question of the collegiality which the Second Vatican Council stressed insistently. The Bishop is the visible source and foundation of unity of the particular Church of which he is pastor (*Lumen Gentium*, 23); but as a member of the Episcopal College he is obliged to act in solidarity with his brothers when there arise problems common to other ecclesial communities, especially if these problems affect the whole territory of a nation. For this reason, I am filled with joy at the image the Church offers in your country, a manifest sign of salvation and sacrament of unity for all men (*Lumen Gentium*, 1), and therefore a model for the brotherly coexistence of the nation.

I wish to dwell particularly on one point, when emphasizing the operating unanimity of your aspirations: adequate and intense pastoral care for religious vocations and, above all, priestly vocations. It is an indispensable necessity, for which I, too, feel anxious solicitude when I look at countries where, as in yours, there is still lacking an organic and adequate development of the body of the particular Churches, which are obliged, for their life and mission, to avail themselves of the precious and generous, but precarious help that the clergy of other nations can offer.

For this reason I give fervent thanks to the Lord of the harvest who, for some time now, has been bringing forth a growing number of priestly vocations in your dioceses.

I consider it superfluous to call attention to the necessity of forming adequately the future workers in the vineyard. But allow me to stress that, in your mission as pastors, priority should go to care

for the spirituality of those who will be your immediate collaborators, as well as of those whom the Lord has already put at your side. Let solicitude for your priests have all the vigour and all the delicate attentions that your fatherly office calls for, above all in order that supernatural inspiration, interpreting adequately the essence of the Gospel message, may play a decisive part in their attitudes and in their conduct.

Let this spiritual animation be your concern also in looking for, forming, and directing the other forces from whom the Church today asks a substantial organized contribution for the development of her mission.

In this way your five-year pastoral plan, prepared for the whole country, will be able to pass to a dynamic executive phase for the sanctification of the people of God. The moral and religious renewal of important sectors will also benefit, as is called for by serious necessities and fatal trends on which you have recently raised your voice.

I deeply appreciate your vigilant and efficacious zeal in the whole area of the specific mission of the Church. The latter, foreign to interventions that are outside her sphere of competence, renders service—certainly not a contingent one—to the cause of humanity in general and of the people in the midst of whom she acts as mother and teacher. In this connection you have made an explicit and well-balanced pronouncement, and I myself dealt with this fundamental subject in the opening address of the Third General Conference of the Latin-American Episcopate. It is a way clearly marked out for evangelization in a continent which I love deeply and in which your country has had and keeps a place of great prestige. It remains for me only to tell you, in such a delicate field, that I rely greatly on your zeal and on that of all your collaborators. But I also wish to express the hope that the human and Christian wisdom of your fellow citizens will benefit trustfully from the Magisterium and the work of the Church.

I wish to return again to the starting point of this talk: in spirit I go on pilgrimage to the Sanctuary of the Virgin of the Thirty-Three, commending to her motherly love your toil, your sorrows, your aspirations and those of all your priests, deacons, men and women religious, seminarians, all those engaged in pastoral work, and your whole people.

Receive the Apostolic Blessing which I willingly impart to you and which I wish to send to Cardinal Antonio Barbieri, this outstanding pastor who is completing in suffering and in prayer the long and precious service rendered to the Church in your country.

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