



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE FOURTH GROUP OF BISHOPS FROM MEXICO
ON THEIR "AD LIMINA" VISIT**

Thursday, 29 September 2005

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate,

I am pleased to receive you on the occasion of your *ad limina* visit, to greet you all together and to encourage you in hope, so necessary for the ministry that you generously exercise in your respective Archdioceses and Dioceses of the Ecclesiastical Provinces of Acapulco, Antequera and Yucatán. I thank Cardinal Juan Sandoval Íñiguez, Archbishop of Guadalajara, for his words expressing your loyalty and sincere affection.

In this you also reflect the deep religious spirit of the Mexican People and the high esteem in which your communities hold the Pope. Please convey my grateful greeting to them and remind them that I keep them especially present in my prayers.

With your pilgrimage to the tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul, you have had the opportunity to strengthen the bonds that unite your ministry to the mission that Christ entrusted to the Twelve and to draw inspiration from their example of self-denying dedication to the evangelization of all peoples. At this meeting and at others with the Roman Curia, the communion with the See of Peter and concern for the universal Church of all the Bishops become visible and effective (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 23).

"The Son of man" did not come "to be served by others but to serve, to give his own life as a ransom for the many" (Mt 20: 28). With these words, the Lord taught us to carry out our mission. From deep communion with him flows spontaneously the participation in his love for human beings and makes heavy burdens light to bear. It makes service joyful and productive.

The essential aspect of our ministry, therefore, is our personal union with Christ. He teaches us that living to the full is not synonymous with success (cf. Mt 16: 25), but in the love and the gift of oneself to others. Moreover, those who work for Christ know that "one man sows; another reaps" (Jn 4: 37).

The Bishops' teaching role consists in passing on Christ's Gospel with its moral and religious values, while keeping in mind the different realities and aspirations that appear in contemporary society, with whose situation Bishops must be very familiar.

"It is important that special efforts be made to explain properly the reasons for the Church's position, stressing that it is not a case of imposing on non-believers a vision based on faith, but of interpreting and defending the values rooted in the very nature of the human person" (*Novo Millennio Ineunte*, n. 51).

At the same time, the Pastors of the Church in Mexico must pay special attention to the most destitute groups and to the poor, as did the early Christian communities. They continue to account for a large sector of the national population and sometimes are the victims of inadequate and unacceptable structures.

According to the Gospel, the satisfactory response is to encourage solidarity and peace, which truly pave the way to justice. So it is that the Church seeks to cooperate effectively in order to eradicate every form of marginalization, directing Christians to practise justice and love. In this regard, encourage those with extra available resources to share them, as Christ himself urges us, with their neediest brothers and sisters (cf. Mt 25: 35-40).

Not only is it necessary to alleviate the most serious needs, but also to go to their roots and suggest ways of making social, political and financial structures fairer and more supportive. Charity will thus be at the service of culture, politics, the economy and the family, and will become the basis of authentic human and community development (cf. *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, n. 51).

The Mexican People, rich in culture, history, traditions and piety, are marked by their joyfulness and deep festive sense. This has been an expression of Christian joy since the times of the first evangelization and gives vivid colour to the celebrations and events of popular piety.

It is up to Pastors to direct this particular feature, so common to the Mexican faithful, towards a solid, mature faith that can shape a lifestyle consistent with what they so joyfully profess. It will also intensify the growing missionary drive of Mexicans who are responding to the Lord's mandate: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations" (Mt 28: 19; cf. *Ecclesia in America*, n. 74).

In Mexico, where the "genius" of women, who ensure a fine sensitivity for human beings, is so

frequently expressed (cf. *Mulieris Dignitatem*, n. 30) in the family circle, in Ecclesial Communities, in social assistance and in other areas of secular life, one sometimes sees the paradox of women exalted in theory but in practice underrated and experiencing discrimination.

Therefore, following the example of the sensitivity and respect with which Jesus treated women, your challenge continues to be to change the mentality in order to ensure that they are treated with the proper dignity in all milieus, and to protect their irreplaceable mission as mothers and the first teachers of their children.

In addition, the pastoral care of youth is a very important task today. With their questions and their worries and also the joy of their faith, they continue to be an incentive to us in our ministry.

Many of them erroneously imagine that commitment and making definitive decisions entails the loss of freedom. It is right to remind them, instead, that people become free when they unconditionally commit themselves to truth and goodness. Only in this way, if they keep Jesus at the centre of their lives, will they be able to give life meaning and build something important and lasting.

I invite you once again, dear Brothers, to proceed and act together, in a spirit of communion, whose summit and inexhaustible source is the Eucharist. Mexico had the grace of celebrating this great Sacrament solemnly at the recent International Eucharistic Congress at Guadalajara. I am certain that this ecclesial event has left a deep mark on the faithful, which it would be good to follow up, cherishing it as a treasure of faith celebrated and shared.

Be champions and models of communion. Just as the Church is one, so too the Episcopate is one, since the Pope, as the Second Vatican Council said, is "the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the Bishops and of the whole company of the faithful" (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 23).

Communion also has great pastoral importance since apostolic initiatives are increasingly crossing diocesan boundaries and demand ever greater collaboration, common projects and coordination in a Country as vast as Mexico. The mobility of the population and the spread of its great urban centres are gaining momentum and demand a methodical and far-reaching evangelization (cf. *Ecclesia in America*, n. 21).

Dear Brothers, before concluding this Meeting, I assure you of my deep communion in prayer together with my firm hope in the spiritual renewal of your Dioceses. I entrust all these desires and your pastoral ministry to the motherly intercession of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Take back my affectionate greeting to your priests, to the men and women religious, the pastoral workers and all your diocesan faithful. With deep affection, I impart my Apostolic Blessing to you

and to them all.

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