



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO MEXICO AND THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA

(MARCH 23-29, 2012)

HOLY MASS

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

Expo Bicentenario Park, León

Sunday, 25 March 2012

[Video]

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am very pleased to be among you today and I express my sincere gratitude to the Most Reverend José Guadalupe Martín Rábago, Archbishop of León, for his kind words of welcome. I greet the Mexican Bishops, and the Cardinals and other Bishops present here, and in a special way those who have come from Latin America and the Caribbean. I also extend a warm greeting to the authorities that are with us, as well as all who have gathered for this Holy Mass presided by the Successor of Peter.

We said, “A pure heart, create for me, O God” (*Ps 50:12*) during the responsorial psalm. This exclamation shows us how profoundly we must prepare to celebrate next week the great mystery of the passion, death and resurrection of the Lord. It also helps us to look deeply into the human heart, especially in times of sorrow as well as hope, as are the present times for the people of Mexico and of Latin America.

The desire for a heart that would be pure, sincere, humble, acceptable to God was very much felt by Israel as it became aware of the persistence in its midst of evil and sin as a power, practically implacable and impossible to overcome. There was nothing left but to trust in God’s mercy and in

the hope that he would change from within, from the heart, an unbearable, dark and hopeless situation. In this way recourse gained ground to the infinite mercy of the Lord who does not wish the sinner to die but to convert and live (cf. *Ez 33:11*). A pure heart, a new heart, is one which recognizes that, of itself, it is impotent and places itself in God's hands so as to continue hoping in his promises. Then the psalmist can say to the Lord with conviction: "Sinners will return to you" (*Ps 50:15*). And towards the end of the psalm he will give an explanation which is at the same time a firm conviction of faith: "A humble, contrite heart you will not spurn" (v. 19).

The history of Israel relates some great events and battles, but when faced with its more authentic existence, its decisive destiny, its salvation, it places its hope not in its own efforts, but in God who can create a new heart, not insensitive or proud. This should remind each one of us and our peoples that, when addressing the deeper dimension of personal and community life, human strategies will not suffice to save us. We must have recourse to the One who alone can give life in its fullness, because he is the essence of life and its author; he has made us sharers in the same through his Son Jesus Christ.

Today's Gospel takes up the topic and shows us how this ancient desire for the fullness of life has actually been achieved in Christ. Saint John explains it in a passage in which the wish of some Greeks to see Jesus coincides with the moment in which the Lord is about to be glorified. Jesus responds to the question of the Greeks, who represent the pagan world, saying: "Now the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified" (*Jn 12:23*). This is a strange response which seems inconsistent with the question asked by the Greeks. What has the glorification of Jesus to do with the request to meet him? But there is a relation. Someone might think – says Saint Augustine – that Jesus felt glorified because the Gentiles were coming to him. This would be similar to the applause of the multitudes who give "glory" to those who are grand in the world, as we would say today. But this is not so. "It was convenient that, before the wonder of his glorification, should come the humility of his passion" (*In Joannis Ev. 51:9: PL 35, 1766*).

Jesus' answer, announcing his imminent passion, means that a casual encounter in those moments would have been superficial and perhaps deceptive. The Greeks will see the one they wished to meet raised up on the cross from which he will attract all to himself (cf. *Jn 12:32*). There his "glory" will begin, because of his sacrifice of expiation for all, as the grain of wheat fallen to the ground that by dying germinates and produces abundant fruit. They will find the one whom, unknown to them, they were seeking in their hearts, the true God who is made visible to all peoples. This was how Our Lady of Guadalupe showed her divine Son to Saint Juan Diego, not as a powerful legendary hero but as the very God of the living, by whom all live, the Creator of persons, of closeness and immediacy, of heaven and earth (cf. *Nican Mopohua*, v.33). At that moment she did what she had done previously at the wedding feast of Cana. Faced with the embarrassment caused by the lack of wine, she told the servants clearly that the path to follow was her Son: "Do whatever he tells you" (*Jn 2:5*).

Dear brothers and sisters, by coming here I have been able to visit the monument to Christ the King situated on top of the Cubilete. My venerable predecessor, [Blessed Pope John Paul II](#), although he ardently desired to do so, was unable on his several journeys to this beloved land to visit this site of such significance for the faith of the Mexican people. I am sure that in heaven he is happy that the Lord has granted me the grace to be here with you and that he has blessed the millions of Mexicans who have venerated his relics in every corner of the country. This monument represents Christ the King. But his crowns, one of a sovereign, the other of thorns, indicate that his royal status does not correspond to how it has been or is understood by many. His kingdom does not stand on the power of his armies subduing others through force or violence. It rests on a higher power than wins over hearts: the love of God that he brought into the world with his sacrifice and the truth to which he bore witness. This is his sovereignty which no one can take from him and which no one should forget. Hence it is right that this shrine should be above all a place of pilgrimage, of fervent prayer, of conversion, of reconciliation, of the search for truth and the acceptance of grace. We ask Christ, to reign in our hearts, making them pure, docile, filled with hope and courageous in humility.

From this park, foreseen as a memorial of the bicentenary of the birth of the Mexican nation, bringing together many differences towards one destiny and one common quest, we ask Christ for a pure heart, where he as Prince of Peace may dwell “thanks to the power of God who is the power of goodness, the power of love”. But for God to dwell in us, we need to listen to him; we must allow his Word to challenge us every day, meditating upon it in our hearts after the example of Mary (cf. *Lk 2:51*). In this way we grow in friendship with him, we learn to understand what he expects from us and we are encouraged to make him known to others.

At Aparecida, the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean saw with clarity the need to confirm, renew and revitalize the newness of the Gospel rooted deeply in the history of these lands “on the basis of a personal and community encounter with Jesus Christ which raises up disciples and missionaries” (*Final Document*, 11). The *Continental Mission* now taking place in the various dioceses of this continent has the specific task of transmitting this conviction to all Christians and ecclesial communities so that they may resist the temptation of a faith that is superficial and routine, at times fragmentary and incoherent. Here we need to overcome fatigue related to faith and rediscover “the joy of being Christians, of being sustained by the inner happiness of knowing Christ and belonging to his Church. From this joy spring the energies that are needed to serve Christ in distressing situations of human suffering, placing oneself at his disposition and not falling back on one’s own comfort” ([Address to the Roman Curia, 22 December 2011](#)). This can be seen clearly in the saints who dedicated themselves fully to the cause of the Gospel with enthusiasm and joy without counting the cost, even of life itself. Their heart was centred entirely on Christ from whom they had learned what it means to love until the end.

In this sense the Year of Faith, to which I have convoked the whole Church, “is an invitation to an authentic and renewed conversion to the Lord, the only Saviour of the world [...]. Faith grows

when it is lived as an experience of love received and when it is communicated as an experience of grace and joy” (*Porta Fidei* 6, 7).

Let us ask the Blessed Virgin Mary to assist us in purifying our hearts, especially in view of the coming Easter celebrations, that we may enter more deeply the salvific mystery of her Son, as she made it known in this land. And let us also ask her to continue accompanying and protecting her Mexican and Latin American children, that Christ may reign in their lives and help them boldly to promote peace, harmony, justice and solidarity. Amen.

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