



The Holy See

***LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE CUBAN BISHOPS' CONFERENCE
ON OCCASION OF THE 20th ANNIVERSARY OF THE
CUBAN NATIONAL ECCLESIAL MEETING (ENEC)***

*To Cardinal Jaime Lucas Ortega y Alamino
Archbishop of San Cristóbal de La Habana
President of the Cuban Bishops' Conference*

On the occasion of the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Cuban National Ecclesial Meeting (ENEC), I would like to send an affectionate greeting to the Bishops as well as to the priests, consecrated persons and lay faithful of this beloved Nation. I would also like to express my spiritual closeness to them in order to give an impetus to their evangelizing tasks.

Human reality is full of events that we are asked to live as salvific, since time and history are peopled by the divine presence that encourages and strengthens.

On this anniversary, therefore, when you think back to past experiences, you should strive to approach this reality as a path of promise and salvation on which you should walk with care and compassion, to discover from experience the signs and symbols of the living God who accompanies you.

Yes, he accompanies all who live on this earth, believers and non-believers alike, the near and the far, those who sow and those who scatter, for all are invited to the feast of life that the Father gives to us.

In this regard, it would be good in this anniversary reflection to remember in particular the words that my Predecessor, Pope John Paul II, spoke during his Visit to this beloved Land: "May Cuba... open itself up to the world, and may the world open itself up to Cuba" (*Arrival Address at José*

Martí Airport in Havana, 21 January 1998, n. 5; L'Osservatore Romano English edition, 28 January, p. 2).

First of all, however, this opening requires one to examine how to open one's heart and mind to the things of God; how to be reciprocally open to all who live side by side, believing and trusting in one another despite differences in ways of thinking and believing; and lastly, how to be open to the global context, with the challenges of its possibilities and at the same time its difficulties.

Only by setting out from God's gaze, a loving gaze, will it be possible to reach the truth of every person, of every group and of all who live in the same land. The experience of prayer of every Christian in the silence and humility of daily work, in fidelity to the faith professed and in the implicit or explicit proclamation of the Gospel, will be a great help in undertaking this journey.

The profound love of most Cubans for *Madre de la Caridad del Cobre*, for so long Patronness of this Land and one who accompanies its inhabitants with motherly tenderness, will also be a great help.

To her I entrust these meetings for the 20th anniversary of the ENEC so that her closeness may encourage hope and her intercession with her divine Son obtain the gift of strengthening in the faith this part of the People of God.

With these sentiments, I warmly impart my Apostolic Blessing to all the participants as well as to the various Ecclesial Communities of Cuba.

From the Vatican, 2 February 2006

BENEDICT XVI

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