



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE BISHOPS OF CUBA ON THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE VISIT OF POPE JOHN PAUL II**

*To the Bishops of Cuba
on the 10th anniversary of the Visit
of Pope John Paul II to the Country
Dear Brothers in the Episcopate,*

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope" (Rom 15: 13). These words of the Apostle resound among you again, stirring up sentiments in celebrating the memorable Visit of the Servant of God John Paul II to Cuban soil, where he came intending "to strengthen you in hope and to encourage you in love" (Welcome Ceremony, 21 January 1998).

Besides, to recall, 10 years after that unforgettable day for the Church and the Cuban People lived as well under the emotional gaze of the entire world, is undoubtedly a duty of gratitude towards my venerable Predecessor, and also a manifestation of an ardent proposal to renew the authentic impulse of evangelization that he left deeply impressed in the hearts of all. I greet with affection Cardinal Jaime Lucas Ortega y Alamino, Archbishop of Havana, President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Cuba, Bishop Juan García Rodríguez and each of the other Bishops that comprise it.

I feel myself spiritually among you, as the presence of Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, my Secretary of State, testifies, and at the same time I renew the esteem of the Successor of Peter for your pastoral commitments, and also my closeness to the aspirations and concerns of all Cubans. I constantly ask the Lord to give you strength and generosity to live your faith more intensely each day and to work in favour of a world enlightened by the Gospel.

In Cuba the proclamation of Christ's Gospel continues to find well-disposed hearts to welcome it, thus bearing the constant responsibility to help them grow in the spiritual life, proposing to them that "high standard of ordinary Christian living" (Novo Millennio Ineunte, n. 31) proper to the vocation of holiness of every baptized person. To proclaim correct doctrine, to encourage listening to and a deepening of the Word of God, to promote participation in the sacraments and the life of

prayer are the primary goals of pastoral activity, since bringing Christ's salvation to all is the very heart of the Church's mission.

At times, some Christian communities feel oppressed by difficulties, scarce resources, indifference or even diffidence, which can lead to discouragement. In these cases, the good disciple will feel comforted by the words of the Master: "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Lk 12: 32). The believer knows that he can always put his own hope in Christ Jesus our Lord, who does not disappoint (cf. I Thes 1: 3) and fills his heart with joy (cf. I Pt 1: 6), giving meaning and fruitfulness to his life of faith.

As a matter of fact, a little light can illuminate the whole house, and while the leaven is small, it makes the entire mass rise (cf. Mt 13: 33). How often little gestures of friendship and good will, simple daily gestures of respect, attention to the suffering or dedication to the good of others, free of self-interest, make God's boundless love for all and for each individual come to light.

Therefore, the Church's mission in Cuba, carried out in favour of the most needy, also acquires great importance with its concrete works of service and care for men and women of every condition who merit not only to be sustained in their material needs, but also to be welcomed with kindness and understanding. The Pope profoundly thanks the people and communities who are dedicated to these tasks for their effort and sacrifice, following the example of Christ who "came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mk 10: 45).

Dear Brothers, you have in your hands the care of the Lord's vineyard in Cuba. Five centuries ago the proclamation of the Gospel arrived and its values have had a great influence on the birth of the Nation, the work, above all, of the Servant of God Félix Varela and of the promoter of love among Cubans and among all people, José Martí. They saw in these values a vital element for the Country's harmony and happy future.

This heritage is rooted in the Cuban soul, which today needs your generous pastoral solicitude to enliven it ever more, showing that the Church, focusing its gaze on Jesus Christ, strives to do good, to promote the dignity of the person and, sowing sentiments of understanding, mercy and reconciliation, contributes to the betterment of humanity and society.

You know that you can count on the closeness of the Pope and the fraternal prayer and collaboration of the other particular Churches spread throughout the world.

I ask you to convey my affectionate greeting to the priests, religious communities and lay faithful, as well as to all Cubans, for whom I invoke the *Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre* with the same words that my venerable Predecessor John Paul II prayed before her during his Visit that we are commemorating: "Make the Cuban Nation a home of brothers and sisters so that this people will open wide its mind, its heart and its life to Christ, the sole Saviour and Redeemer, who lives and

reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever" (*Homily at Santiago de Cuba*, 24 January 1998, n. 6).

With a special Apostolic Blessing.

BENEDICTUS PP. XVI

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana