



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
ON THE OCCASION OF THE MEETING OF BISHOPS
WHO HEAD EPISCOPAL COMMISSIONS FOR THE FAMILY AND LIFE
IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

[BOGOTA, 28 MARCH - 1 APRIL 2011]

*To my Venerable Brother
Cardinal Ennio Antonelli
President of the Pontifical Council for the Family*

I am pleased to greet you cordially, Your Eminence, and the other cardinals, bishops and priests who are participating in the meeting of the leaders of the Episcopal Commissions for the Family and Life of Latin America and the Caribbean, which is taking place in Bogotá.

As I reiterated in the [Fifth General Conference of the Episcopate of Latin America and the Caribbean](#), the family is the value dearest to the peoples of those noble lands. For this reason, family ministry has an important part to play in the evangelizing activity of each of the different particular Churches, promoting a culture of life and working to ensure that the rights of families are recognized and respected.

One notes, however, with sadness, that homes are coming under increasingly adverse conditions caused by rapid cultural changes, by social instability, by the flows of migrants, by poverty, by educational programs that trivialize sexuality and by false ideologies. We cannot remain indifferent to these challenges. In the Gospel we find the light needed to respond to them without losing heart. Christ with his grace urges us to work with diligence and enthusiasm to accompany each one of the family members in discovering God's plan of love for the human person. No effort is therefore wasted in promoting anything that can help to ensure that each family, founded on the indissoluble union between a man and a woman, accomplishes its mission of being a living cell of society, a nursery of virtues, a school of constructive and peaceful coexistence, an instrument of

harmony and a privileged environment in which human life is welcomed and protected, joyfully and responsibly, from its beginning until its natural end.

It is also worthwhile to continue to encourage parents in their fundamental right and obligation to educate the new generations in faith and in the values that ennoble human existence.

I have no doubt that the continental mission launched in Aparecida, and which is awakening so many hopes everywhere, will serve to revive the pastoral care of marriage and the family in the beloved countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. The Church can count on Christian families, calling them to be true instruments of evangelization and of the apostolate and inviting them to become aware of their invaluable mission in the world.

I therefore encourage all the participants in this important meeting to develop in their reflections the broad pastoral themes outlined by the bishops gathered in Aparecida. Thus they will enable the family to experience a profound encounter with Christ through listening to His Word, prayer, sacramental life and the practice of charity.

In this way, one will help put into practice a solid spiritual life that encourages in all its members a strong aspiration to holiness, without fear of displaying the beauty of the high ideals and ethical and moral demands of life in Christ. To promote this, it is necessary to develop further the training of all those who, in one way or another, are dedicated to the evangelization of families. It is likewise important to plot ways for collaboration with all men and women of good will in order to continue to safeguard intensely all human life, marriage and the family, throughout the region.

I conclude by expressing my affection and solidarity to all the families of Latin America and the Caribbean, particularly those who find themselves in difficult situations. As I entrust to the powerful protection of the Most Holy Virgin Mary the fruits of this laudable initiative, I impart to you a heartfelt Apostolic Blessing, which I extend with great pleasure to those engaged in the evangelization and the promotion of the well-being of families.

From the Vatican, 28 March 2011

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