



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE BISHOPS OF MEXICO (GROUP I - NORTHWEST)
ON THEIR "AD LIMINA APOSTOLORUM" VISIT**

Thursday, 8 September 2005

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate,

I express to you my deep joy at receiving you during your *ad limina* visit, in order to venerate the tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul and to strengthen your bonds of communion with the Successor of Peter. I am grateful for the words of Archbishop José Fernández Arteaga of Chihuahua on behalf of you all, Pastors of the Ecclesiastical Provinces of Chihuahua, Durango, Guadalajara and Hermosillo. I would now like to consider certain points of special interest for the pilgrim Church in Mexico.

The times when Bishops meet are a precious opportunity to live and deepen their unity. In this regard, the Mexican Bishops' Conference is also called to be a living sign of ecclesial communion, directed to facilitating the Bishops' ministry and strengthening their collegiality.

Today, it is more necessary than ever to join forces and exchange experiences, because, as the Second Vatican Council emphasized, "it is often impossible, nowadays especially, for Bishops to exercise their office suitably and fruitfully unless they establish closer understanding and cooperation with other Bishops" (*Christus Dominus*, n. 37).

I therefore encourage you to continue on this path of communion with a view to an increasingly effective and fruitful action.

The Mexican Nation has emerged as an encounter of peoples and cultures whose features have been marked by the living presence of Jesus Christ and the mediation of Mary, "Mother of the True God through whom we live" (*Nican Mopohua*). The riches of the *Acontecimiento*

Guadalupano (event of Guadalupe) brought together different people, histories and cultures in a new situation, through which Mexico has continued to develop its identity and mission.

Today, Mexico is living through a process of transition, characterized by the appearance of groups which are seeking, in a more or less orderly way, new areas for participation and representation. Many of them in particular are forcefully advocating the option for the poor and for those excluded from development, especially the indigenous peoples. The deep longing to consolidate a culture and the democratic, economic and social institutions that recognize the human rights and cultural values of the people must find an echo and an enlightening response in the Church's pastoral action.

The preparation for the Great Jubilee has helped Mexican Catholics to know, accept and love their history as a people and a community of believers. Here, I would like to recall my Predecessor's exhortation: *"Individuals and peoples need a sort of 'healing of memories', so that past evils will not come back again. This does not mean forgetting past events; it means re-examining them with a new attitude and learning precisely from the experience of suffering that only love can build up, whereas hatred produces devastation and ruin"* (John Paul II, [*Message for the World Day of Peace on 1 January 1997*](#), n. 3; *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, 18/25 December 1996, p. 3).

This challenge requires an integral formation in all Church contexts that will help the faithful, each and every one, to live the Gospel in life's different dimensions. Only in this way will they be able to account for the hope that is in them (cf. I Pt 3: 15). The traditional ways of living the faith, passed on sincerely and naturally through family customs and teaching, must mature in personal and community choices.

This formation is particularly necessary for young people; when they cease to participate in the Ecclesial Community through the sacraments of initiation, they find themselves facing a society marked by growing cultural and religious pluralism. Furthermore, sometimes very lonely and bewildered, they come up against currents of thought which hold that men and women, without the need for God and even opposed to God, achieve fulfilment through technological, political and economic power.

It is thus necessary to accompany the young, engaging them with enthusiasm, so that on returning to the Ecclesial Community, they will take on the commitment to transform society as a priority for following Christ.

Likewise, families require proper guidance if they are to discover and live their dimension as a "domestic church".

Parents need to receive a formation that will help them to be the "first evangelizers" of their

children; only in this way will parents manage to become their first school of life and faith.

Knowledge of the content of faith alone, however, is never a substitute for the experience of a personal encounter with the Lord.

Catechesis in the parishes and the teaching of religion and morals in schools with a Christian ethic, as well as the living witness of those who have encountered Christ and transmit the faith so as to arouse peoples' aspiration to serve and follow him totally, heart and soul, must favour this experience of recognizing and meeting Christ.

One expression of the Church's wealth is the existence of more than 400 Institutes of Consecrated Life, especially female. Many of these, founded in Mexico, evangelize throughout the Country and in the different cultural milieus and localities.

A large number of them are dedicated to all levels of education, especially in some universities; others work with the poorest of the poor, combining evangelization and human promotion; in hospitals; in the media; in the field of art and the humanities; guiding those who work in the world of economics and business in their spiritual and professional formation.

In addition to all this must be added the wider participation of the lay faithful through various initiatives that reveal their vocation and mission in society. There is also a growing number of national and international lay movements which promote the renewal of married and family life as well as a greater community experience.

The Church in Mexico reflects the pluralism of society itself which has been shaped by many different realities, some good and very promising, others more complex. In the face of this pluralism, Bishops must encourage some systematic pastoral processes that give fuller meaning to manifestations that derived casually from tradition or custom. These processes must aim first of all to integrate the directives of the Council with the pastoral challenges presented by the different concrete situations.

Contemporary society is questioning and observing the Church, demanding consistency and daring in the faith. Visible signs of credibility will be the witness of life, the unity of believers, service to the poor and the tireless promotion of their dignity.

The task of evangelization requires us to be creative but ever faithful to the Tradition of the Church and her Magisterium. Because we live in a new culture marked by the social communications media, the Church in Mexico must make the most, in this respect, of the collaboration of her faithful, the training of many cultured people and the opportunities that the public institutions concede in this area (cf. John Paul II, *Ecclesia in America*, n. 72).

Revealing the face of Christ in the context of the media demands a serious formative and apostolic effort that cannot be postponed and moreover, needs the contribution of all.

Dear Brothers, today we are celebrating the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. United in one heart and one mind, I entrust you to her motherly care, together with the priests, Religious communities and faithful of your Dioceses. Take back to all of them the Pope's greeting and love, while I impart my Apostolic Blessing with affection to you all.

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