



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY
OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO BRAZIL ON THE OCCASION OF THE FIFTH GENERAL CONFERENCE
OF THE BISHOPS OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

WELCOME CEREMONY

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

*International Airport of São Paulo/Guarulhos
Wednesday, 9 May 2007*

Mr President,

My Venerable Brothers in the College of Cardinals and in the Episcopate,

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ!

1. I am very pleased to begin my Pastoral Visit to Brazil and to express to Your Excellency, as Head of State and Supreme Representative of the great Brazilian Nation, my gratitude for the warm welcome offered to me. I willingly extend my thanks also to the members of the Government accompanying you, as well as to the civil and military dignitaries present, and to the authorities of the State of São Paulo. In the words of welcome which you addressed to me, Mr President, I hear an echo of the sentiments of affection and love that all the Brazilian people bear towards the Successor of the Apostle Peter.

I offer my fraternal greetings in the Lord to my dear Brother Bishops who have come to receive me in the name of the Church in Brazil. I also greet the priests, religious men and women, the seminarians and the lay people dedicated to the Church's task of evangelization and to authentic Christian living. Finally, I extend my warm greetings to all Brazilians without distinction, men and women, families, the old and the sick, young people and children. To all of you I say from my heart: thank you very much for your generous hospitality!

2. Brazil has a very special place in the Pope's heart, not only because it was born Christian and

has today the largest number of Catholics, but above all because it is a nation endowed with a rich potential and an ecclesial presence that gives joy and hope to the whole Church. My visit, Mr President, has a scope that goes beyond national borders: I have come to preside at the opening Session of the Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean at Aparecida. This country, in the providence and goodness of the Creator, will become the cradle of the ecclesial proposals that, with God's help, will give renewed vigour and missionary impetus to this Continent.

3. In this geographical area, Catholics are in the majority. This means that they must make a particular contribution to the common good of the nation. The word *solidarity* will acquire its full meaning when the living forces of society, each in its own sphere, commit themselves seriously to building a future of peace and hope for all.

The Catholic Church, as I stated in the Encyclical letter *Deus Caritas Est*, "transformed by the Holy Spirit, is called to become a witness before the world of the love of the Father who wishes to make humanity a single family in his Son" (cf. no. 19). From here springs her deep commitment to the mission of evangelization at the service of the cause of peace and justice. Hence the decision to undertake an essentially missionary Conference reflects clearly the concern of the Bishops, as it does mine, to seek suitable ways by which in Jesus Christ "our peoples may have life", as the theme of the Conference reminds us. With these sentiments I raise my eyes beyond the frontiers of this country, and I extend my greetings to all the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean in the words of the Apostle: "Peace to all of you who are in Christ" (*1 Pet 5:14*).

4. Mr President, I am grateful to Divine Providence for this grace of visiting Brazil, a Nation with a great Catholic tradition. I have had occasion to point out the principal motive of my visit, which is concerned with Latin America and has a fundamentally religious significance.

I am happy to be able to spend some days among the Brazilian people. I am well aware that the soul of this people, as of all Latin America, safeguards values that are radically Christian, which will never be eradicated. I am certain that at Aparecida, during the Bishops' General Conference, this identity will be reinforced through the promotion of respect for life from the moment of conception until natural death as an integral requirement of human nature. It will also make the promotion of the human person the axis of solidarity, especially towards the poor and abandoned.

The Church seeks only to stress the moral values present in each situation and to form the conscience of the citizens so that they may make informed and free decisions. She will not fail to insist on the need to take action to ensure that the family, the basic cell of society, is strengthened, and likewise young people, whose formation is a decisive factor for the future of any nation. Last but not least, she will defend and promote the values present at every level of society, especially among indigenous peoples.

With these good wishes and with renewed gratitude for the warm reception that I have received as the Successor of Peter, I invoke the maternal protection of *Nossa Senhora da Conceição Aparecida*, remembered also as *Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe*, Patroness of all America, so that she may protect and inspire those who govern in their difficult task as promoters of the common good, and renew the bonds of Christian fellowship for the good of all the people. May God bless Latin America! God bless Brazil! Thank you!

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