



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

MEETING WITH THE COMMUNITY
LIVING IN THE FAZENDA

GREETING OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

*Fazenda da Esperança, Guaratinguetá
Saturday, 12 May 2007*

Dear Friends!

At last I am here with you at "Fazenda da Esperança"!

1. I greet with particular affection Brother Hans Stapel, founder of the charity "Nossa Senhora da Glória", which is also known as "Fazenda da Esperança". Firstly I wish to rejoice with each of you for having believed in the ideals of good and of peace which define this place.

To all of you who have come here today from the various "fazendas" to be with the Pope—those undergoing treatment and those who have been cured, volunteers, families, those who have already been through the programme, and benefactors—I wish to say: *pax et bonum!*

I know that there are representatives here from other places where the "Fazenda da Esperança" has opened centres. You have come to see the Pope. You have come to listen and to assimilate what I wish to say to you.

2. The Church of today needs a renewed awareness of its task to draw the world's attention to the

voice of him who says: "*I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life*" (Jn 8:12). It is the Pope's mission to renew in the hearts of people everywhere that light which does not grow dim, because it seeks to illumine the depths of every soul that seeks the true good and peace that the world cannot give. All that this light needs is a heart open to the desire for God. God does not force us, he does not oppress our individual freedom; he simply asks for openness in the inner sanctum of our conscience, through which pass all our noblest aspirations, as well as the affections and disordered passions which tend to obscure the message of the Almighty.

3. "*Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me*" (Rev 3:20). These are divine words which penetrate to the depths of our souls and shake us at our deepest roots.

At some stage in people's lives, Jesus comes and gently knocks at the hearts of those properly disposed. Perhaps for you, he did this through a friend or a priest, or, who knows, perhaps he arranged a series of coincidences which enabled you to realize that you are loved by God. Through the institution which has welcomed you, the Lord has given you this opportunity for physical and spiritual recovery, so vital for you and your families. In turn, society expects you to spread this precious gift of health among your friends and all the members of the community.

You must be Ambassadors of hope! Brazil's statistics concerning drug abuse and other forms of chemical dependency are very high. The same is true of Latin America in general. I therefore urge the drug-dealers to reflect on the grave harm they are inflicting on countless young people and on adults from every level of society: God will call you to account for your deeds. Human dignity cannot be trampled upon in this way. The harm done will receive the same censure that Jesus reserved for those who gave scandal to the "little ones", the favourites of God (cf. *Mt 18:7-10*).

4. Through treatment, which includes medical, psychological and educational assistance, and through much prayer, manual work and discipline, many people— especially young people—have already succeeded in freeing themselves from alcohol and drug dependency, thereby recovering meaning in their lives.

I wish to express my appreciation for this work, which has the charism of Saint Francis and the spirituality of the Focolare Movement as its spiritual foundation.

Reintegration in society undoubtedly demonstrates the effectiveness of your initiative. Yet it is the conversions, the rediscovery of God and active participation in the life of the Church which attract even greater attention and which confirm the importance of your work. It is not enough to care for the body, we must adorn the soul with the most precious divine gifts acquired through Baptism.

Let us thank God for all those who have set out along the path of renewed hope, with the help of

the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the celebration of the Eucharist.

5. Dear friends, I cannot let this opportunity pass without thanking all those who contribute materially and spiritually to enable the charity "Nossa Senhora da Glória" to continue its work. May God bless Brother Hans Stapel and Nelson Giovanelli Ros for having answered his call to devote their lives to you. I ask the Lord also to bless all those who work here: the consecrated men and women, and the volunteers. We ask God's special blessing too on all those friends, support groups and authorities who supply your needs, and on all those who love Christ present in these beloved children of his.

My thoughts turn now to those many other institutions throughout the world which work to rebuild and renew the lives of these brothers and sisters of ours present in our midst, whom God loves with a preferential love. I am thinking of groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous as well as the sobriety associations working generously in many communities so as to build up the lives of others.

6. The proximity of the Shrine of Aparecida assures us that the "Fazenda da Esperança" came into being under her protection and maternal gaze. For a long time now, in my prayers, I have been asking Our Lady, Queen and Patron of Brazil, to extend her protective mantle over the participants in the Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean. Your presence here provides a considerable help for the success of this great gathering; offer your prayers, sacrifices, and renunciations on the altar of the Chapel, in the certainty that they will rise up to heaven in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass as a fragrant offering to Almighty God. I am counting on your help! May Saint Frei Galvão and Saint Crescentia keep watch over you and protect each one of you. I bless you all in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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