



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS
"ECCLESIA IN AMERICA" ORGANIZED BY
THE PONTIFICAL COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA
AND THE KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS**

Vatican Basilica

Sunday, 9 December 2012

[Video]

*Dear Cardinals,
Dear Brother Bishops and Priests,
Distinguished Knights of Columbus,*

I am very grateful for the words of Cardinal Marc Ouellet, President of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America, and I rejoice that, together with the Knights of Columbus, he has wished to promote an international Congress in order to examine thoroughly the consideration and perspective of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America* by Blessed John Paul II, and that he has gathered the contributions from the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for America. I cordially greet the Cardinals, Bishops, priests and consecrated people, as well as the many lay people who have come to participate in this important initiative. Your faces bring to my mind and heart the pulse of the American Continent, which is ever present in the Pope's prayers, and whose devotion the Holy See have been able to experience with such pleasure, not only during my pastoral visits to some of your countries, but also each time that I encounter here the pastors and faithful of those beloved lands.

My Venerable Predecessor, Blessed John Paul II, had the clear-sighted intuition to increase the

cooperative relations among the particular Churches of all America — North, Central, and South — and at the same time to stir up greater solidarity among its nations. Today these aims deserve to be reviewed so that the redemptive message of Christ may be put into practice with greater enthusiasm and may produce abundant fruits of holiness and ecclesial renewal.

The theme which guided the reflections of that Synodal Assembly can also serve as inspiration for the work of those days: “Encounter with the Living Jesus Christ, the Way to Conversion, Communion, and Solidarity in America”. In fact, the love of the Lord Jesus and the power of his grace must take root — more intensely at every moment — in the hearts of persons, families, and Christian communities in your nations, so that within them you may go forth with dynamism towards the paths of concord and just progress. On this account, it is a gift of Providence that your Congress was held shortly after the Year of Faith began and during the General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, dedicated to the new evangelization, thus your meditations will greatly contribute to the arduous and needed work of making the Gospel of Christ resound with clarity and boldness.

The above-mentioned Apostolic Exhortation already delineated the challenges and difficulties that even now are still beset by unusual and complex features. Actually, secularism and different religious groups are expanding on all sides, giving rise to numerous problems. Education and the promotion of a culture of life is of fundamental urgency in the face of the diffusion of a mentality which offends the dignity of the person and neither favours nor protects the institution of marriage and of family life. How could we not be preoccupied by the sorrowful situations regarding the emigration, extirpation or violence, especially that caused by organized crime, drug-trafficking, corruption or the trade in armaments? And what can one say regarding harmful inconsistencies and "exchanges", provoked by poverty, by questionable economic, political, and social means?

All these important questions require careful study. Yet in addition to their technical evaluation, the Catholic Church is convinced that the light for an adequate solution can only come from encounter with the living Christ, which gives rise to attitudes and ways of acting based on love and truth. This is the decisive force which will transform the American continent.

Dear friends, the love of Christ impels us to devote ourselves without reserve to proclaiming his Name throughout America, bringing it freely and enthusiastically to the hearts of all its inhabitants. There is no more rewarding or beneficial work than this. There is no greater service that we can provide to our brothers and sisters. They are thirsting for God. For this reason, we ought to take up this commitment with conviction and joyful dedication, encouraging priests, deacons, consecrated men and women and pastoral agents to purify and strengthen their interior lives ever more fully through a sincere relationship with the Lord and a worthy and frequent reception of the sacraments. This will be encouraged by suitable catechesis and a correct and ongoing doctrinal formation marked by complete fidelity to the word of God and the Church’s Magisterium and aimed at offering a response to the deepest questions and aspirations of the human heart. The witness of

your faith will thus be more eloquent and incisive, and you will grow in unity in the fulfilment of your apostolate. A renewed missionary spirit and zealous generosity in your commitment will be an irreplaceable contribution to what the universal Church expects and needs from the Church in America.

As a model of openness to God's grace and of perfect concern for others, there shines forth on your continent the figure of Mary Most Holy, Star of the New Evangelization, invoked throughout America under the glorious title of Our Lady of Guadalupe. As I commend this Congress to her maternal and loving protection, I impart to you, the organizers and participants, my Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of abundant divine graces

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