



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE BENEDICT XVI
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE XV WORLD SEMINAR
FOR CATHOLIC CIVIL AVIATION CHAPLAINS
AND CHAPLAINCY MEMBERS***

*Consistory Hall
Monday 11 June 2012*

*Your Eminence,
Dear Civil Aviation Chaplains and Chaplaincy Members,
Dear brothers and sisters,*

I am happy to welcome you at the beginning of the XV World Seminar for Catholic Civil Aviation Chaplains and Chaplaincy Members, promoted by the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People on the topic “The New Evangelization in the Field of Civil Aviation”. I extend a warm greeting to the President of the Dicastery, Cardinal Antonio Maria Vegliò, and I thank him for the words which he has addressed to me. I greet affectionately all of you who are taking part in these days of prayer, study and exchange, with a view to reaffirming and deepening the spiritual motives that inspire you to continue your specific ecclesial service with renewed zeal and enthusiasm.

I am pleased to hear that during this Seminar, with the assistance of expert speakers, you intend to reflect on new methods and new forms of evangelization in your area of ministry. Dear friends, always be conscious that you are called to embody in the world’s airports the Church’s mission of bringing God to man and leading man to the encounter with God. Airports are places that increasingly reflect the globalized reality of our time. Here one finds people of a wide variety of nationalities, cultures, religions, social status and age. One also comes across all manner of difficult human situations that demand increasing attention. I think, for example, of people waiting

anxiously as they seek to pass through border controls without the necessary documentation, either as immigrants or asylum seekers. I think of the inconvenience caused by anti-terrorism security measures. Airport communities also reflect the crisis of faith that affects many people, with the result that the content of Christian doctrine and the values that it teaches are no longer regarded as points of reference, even in countries with a long tradition of ecclesial life. This is the human and spiritual environment in which you are called to proclaim the Good News with renewed vigour by your words, by your presence, by your example and by the witness you bear. Be assured that even in chance encounters, people are able to recognize a man of God, and that often a small seed falling on good soil can bring forth abundant fruit.

In airports, moreover, you have daily contact with a great many men and women who work in an environment marked by continuous mobility and constant technological development, both of which tend to obscure the centrality of the human person. Often more attention is paid to efficiency and productivity than to the love of neighbour and the solidarity that should always characterize human relations. Here too, your presence is of great value and importance: it is a living witness to a God who is close to human beings, and it serves as a reminder never to show indifference to those one meets, but to treat them generously and lovingly. I encourage you to be radiant signs of this charity of Christ which brings serenity and peace.

Dear friends, make sure that every person, of whatever nationality or social background, can find in you a welcoming heart, able to listen and understand. Through your Christian and priestly lives, may everyone experience something of the love that comes from God, drawing them to a renewed and deeper relationship with Christ, who speaks without fail to those who open up to him trustfully, especially in prayer. Hence the importance of airport chapels as places of silence and spiritual solace.

In this pastoral service, your model and protector is the Blessed Virgin Mary, whom you venerate under the title of Our Lady of Loreto, the patron saint of all who travel by air, in accordance with the tradition that attributes to the angels the transportation of Mary's house from Nazareth to Loreto. But there is another "flight", of far greater significance for humanity, to which that Holy House bears witness, namely the journey of the Archangel Gabriel, who brought to Mary the joyful news that she was to be the Mother of the Son of the Most High (cf. *Lk* 1:26-32). In this way the Eternal One entered into time, God became man and came to dwell among us (cf. *Jn* 1:14). It is the manifestation of God's infinite love for his creation. While we were still sinners, God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to redeem us with his death and resurrection. He did not remain "on high" but became immersed in the joys and anxieties of the men and women of his time and of all time, sharing in their lot and restoring their hope.

This is the mission of the Church, to proclaim Jesus Christ, the one Saviour of the world, "a mission", in the words of the Servant of God, Pope Paul VI, "which the vast and profound changes of present-day society make all the more urgent" (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 14). Indeed, in our own

times, we too “feel the urgent need to give a fresh impetus and new approaches to the work of evangelization in a world in which the breaking down of frontiers and the new processes of globalization are bringing individuals and peoples even closer. This is both because of the development of the means of social communication and because of the frequency and ease with which individuals and groups can move about today.” (*Message for the 2012 World Day of Migrants and Refugees*).

Dear Brothers, may your daily encounter with the Lord Jesus in the Eucharist and in personal prayer give you the enthusiasm and the strength to be heralds of the newness of the Gospel, which transforms hearts and makes all things new. Be assured of my remembrance in prayer, that you may be effective instruments in assisting those entrusted to your pastoral care to cross the “*porta fidei*”, accompanying them in their encounter with Christ, who is living and active among us. With these sentiments, I willingly impart to you my Apostolic Blessing, which I extend to all who share in your ministry and to all who belong to the vast world of civil aviation.