



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO RIO DE JANEIRO
ON THE OCCASION OF THE XXVIII WORLD YOUTH DAY

WELCOME CEREMONY

ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS

Garden of Guanabara Palace, Rio de Janeiro
Monday, 22 July 2013

Madam President,
Distinguished Authorities,
Brethren and Friends!

In his loving providence, God willed that the first international trip of my pontificate should take me back to my beloved Latin America, specifically to Brazil, a country proud of its links to the Apostolic See and of its deep sentiments of faith and friendship that have always kept it united in a special way to the Successor of Peter. I am grateful for this divine benevolence.

I have learned that, to gain access to the Brazilian people, it is necessary to pass through its great heart; so let me knock gently at this door. I ask permission to come in and spend this week with you. I have neither silver nor gold, but I bring with me the most precious thing given to me: Jesus Christ! I have come in his name, to feed the flame of fraternal love that burns in every heart; and I wish my greeting to reach one and all: *The peace of Christ be with you!*

I cordially greet the President and the distinguished members of her government. I thank her for her warm welcome and for the words by which she expressed the joy of all Brazilians at my presence in their country. I also greet the state governor who is hosting us in the government palace, and the mayor of Rio de Janeiro, as well as the members of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the government of Brazil, the other authorities present and all those who worked

hard to make my visit here a reality.

I would like to greet affectionately my brother bishops, to whom falls the serious task of guiding God's flock in this vast country, as well as their beloved local churches. With this visit, I wish to pursue the pastoral mission proper to the Bishop of Rome of confirming my brothers in their faith in Christ, of encouraging them to give an account of the reasons for the hope which comes from him, and of inspiring them to offer everyone the inexhaustible riches of his love.

As you know, the principal reason for my visit to Brazil goes beyond its borders. I have actually come for World Youth Day. I am here to meet young people coming from all over the world, drawn to the open arms of Christ the Redeemer. They want to find a refuge in his embrace, close to his heart, to listen again to his clear and powerful appeal: "Go and make disciples of all nations".

These young people are from every continent, they speak many languages, they bring with them different cultures, and yet they also find in Christ the answer to their highest aspirations, held in common, and they can satisfy the hunger for a pure truth and an authentic love which binds them together in spite of differences.

Christ offers them space, knowing that there is no force more powerful than the one released from the hearts of young people when they have been conquered by the experience of friendship with him. Christ has confidence in young people and entrusts them with the very future of his mission, "Go and make disciples". Go beyond the confines of what is humanly possible and create a world of brothers and sisters! And young people have confidence in Christ: they are not afraid to risk for him the only life they have, because they know they will not be disappointed.

As I begin my visit to Brazil, I am well aware that, in addressing young people, I am also speaking to their families, their local and national church communities, the societies they come from, and the men and women upon whom this new generation largely depends.

Here it is common for parents to say, "Our children are the apple of our eyes". What a beautiful expression of Brazilian wisdom this is, applying to young people an image drawn from our eyes, which are the window through which light enters into us, granting us the miracle of sight! What would become of us if we didn't look after our eyes? How could we move forward? I hope that, during this week, each one of us will ask ourselves this thought-provoking question.

Listen! Young people are the window through which the future enters the world. They are the window, and so they present us with great challenges. Our generation will show that it can rise to the promise found in each young person when we know how to give them space. This means that we have to create the material and spiritual conditions for their full development; to give them a solid basis on which to build their lives; to guarantee their safety and their education to be everything they can be; to pass on to them lasting values that make life worth living; to give them a

transcendent horizon for their thirst for authentic happiness and their creativity for the good; to give them the legacy of a world worthy of human life; and to awaken in them their greatest potential as builders of their own destiny, sharing responsibility for the future of everyone. If we can do all this, we anticipate today the future that enters the world through the window of the young.

As I conclude, I ask everyone to show consideration towards each other and, if possible, the sympathy needed to establish friendly dialogue. The arms of the Pope now spread to embrace all of Brazil in its human, cultural and religious complexity and richness. From the Amazon Basin to the pampas, from the dry regions to the Pantanal, from the villages to the great cities, no one is excluded from the Pope's affection. In two days' time, God willing, I will remember all of you before Our Lady of Aparecida, invoking her maternal protection on your homes and families. But for now I give all of you my blessing. Thank you for your welcome!