



The Holy See

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

MEETING WITH THE BRAZIL'S LEADERS OF SOCIETY

ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS

Municipal Theatre, Rio de Janeiro
Saturday, 27 July 2013

Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen, Good morning!

I thank God for the opportunity to meet such a distinguished representation of the political, diplomatic, cultural and religious, academic and business leaders of this immense country of Brazil.

I wish I could speak to you in your own beautiful Portuguese language, but in order to express more clearly what I carry in my heart, I prefer to speak in Spanish. Please forgive me!

I greet all of you most heartily and I express to you my gratitude. I thank Archbishop Orani and Mr Walmyr Júnior for their kind words of welcome, introduction and testimony. In you I see both memory and hope: the memory of your country's history and identity, and the hope that, in constant openness to the light radiating from the Gospel, this country will continue to develop in full respect for the ethical principles grounded in the transcendent dignity of the person.

Memory of the past and utopian vision of the future meet in the present, which is not simply an intersection without history and without promise, but a moment in time, a challenge to gather wisdom and to know how to pass it on. In every nation, those in positions of responsibility are called to face the future, as the Brazilian thinker Alceu Amoroso Lima once said, "with the calm

gaze of one who knows how to see the truth”.^[1] I would like to share with you three aspects of this calm, serene and wise “gaze”: first, the distinctiveness of your cultural tradition; second, joint responsibility for building the future; and third, constructive dialogue in facing the present moment.

1. It is only right, first of all, to esteem the dynamic and distinctive character of Brazilian culture, with its extraordinary ability to integrate a variety of elements. The common “feeling” of a people, the foundations of its thought and creativity, the basic principles of its life, the criteria with which it assesses priorities and ways of acting, are based on and grow from an integral vision of the human person.

This vision of man and of life so typical of the Brazilian people has also been nourished by the Gospel, by faith in Jesus Christ, in the love of God and brotherhood with our neighbour. The richness of this nourishment can render fruitful a cultural process that is true to Brazilian identity and, at the same time, capable of building a better future for all.

Such a process seeks to promote an integral humanism and the culture of encounter and relationship: this is the Christian way of promoting the common good, the joy of living. Here, faith and reason unite, the religious dimension and the various aspects of human culture – art, science, labour, literature... Christianity combines transcendence and incarnation; it has the capacity to bring ever new vitality to thought and life, in the face of the threat of frustration and disillusionment which can creep into hearts and spread in the streets.

2. A second element which I would like to mention is responsibility for society. This calls for a certain kind of cultural, and hence political, paradigm. We are the ones responsible for training new generations, helping them to be knowledgeable in economic and political affairs, and solidly grounded in ethical values. The future demands a rehabilitation of politics here and now, a rehabilitation of politics, which is one of the highest forms of charity. The future also demands a humanistic vision of the economy and a politics capable of ensuring greater and more effective participation on the part of the people, eliminating forms of elitism and eradicating poverty. No one should be denied what is necessary and everyone should be guaranteed dignity, fraternity and solidarity: this is the road that is proposed. In the days of the prophet Amos, God’s frequent warning was already being heard: “They sell the righteous for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals – they ... trample down the head of the poor into the dust of the earth and push the afflicted out of the way” (*Am 2:6-7*). The outcry, the call for justice, continues to be heard even today.

Anyone exercising a role of leadership – allow me to say, anyone whom life has anointed as a leader – needs to have practical goals and to seek specific means to attain them. At the same time, there is always the risk of disappointment, resentment and indifference, if our plans and goals do not materialize. Here I would appeal to the dynamic of hope that inspires us to keep pressing on, to employ all our energies and abilities on behalf of those for whom we work,

accepting results, making it possible to strike out on new paths, being generous even without apparent results, yet keeping hope alive, with the constancy and courage that comes from accepting a vocation as leader and guide.

Leadership also means making the most just decision after having considered all the options from the standpoint of personal responsibility and concern for the common good. This is the way to go to the heart of the evils of a society and to overcome them, also with the boldness of courageous and free actions. It is our responsibility, within the limits of the possible, to embrace all of reality, observing, pondering, evaluating, in order to make decisions in the present but with an eye to the future, reflecting on the consequences of our decisions. To act responsibly is to see one's own actions in the light of other people's rights and God's judgement. This ethical sense appears today as an unprecedented historic challenge, we must search for it and we must enshrine it within our society. Beyond scientific and technical competence, the present situation also demands a sense of moral obligation expressed in a social and deeply fraternal exercise of responsibility.

3. To complete this reflection, in addition to an integral humanism which respects cultural distinctiveness and fraternal responsibility, an element that I consider essential for facing the present moment is constructive dialogue. Between selfish indifference and violent protest there is always another possible option: that of dialogue. Dialogue between generations, dialogue within the people, because we are all that people, the capacity to give and receive, while remaining open to the truth. A country grows when constructive dialogue occurs between its many rich cultural components: popular culture, university culture, youth culture, artistic culture, technological culture, economic culture, family culture and media culture: when they enter into dialogue. It is impossible to imagine a future for society without a significant injection of moral energy into a democratic order that tends to remain imprisoned in pure logic or in a mere balancing of vested interests. I consider fundamental for this dialogue the contribution made by the great religious traditions, which play a fruitful role as a leaven of society and a life-giving force for democracy. Peaceful coexistence between different religions is favoured by the laicity of the state, which, without appropriating any one confessional stance, respects and esteems the presence of the religious dimension in society, while fostering its more concrete expressions.

When leaders in various fields ask me for advice, my response is always the same: dialogue, dialogue, dialogue. The only way for individuals, families and societies to grow, the only way for the life of peoples to progress, is via the culture of encounter, a culture in which all have something good to give and all can receive something good in return. Others always have something to give me, if we know how to approach them in a spirit of openness and without prejudice. This open spirit, without prejudice, I would describe as "social humility", which is what favours dialogue. Only in this way can understanding grow between cultures and religions, mutual esteem without needless preconceptions, in a climate that is respectful of the rights of everyone. Today, either we take the risk of dialogue, we risk the culture of encounter, or we all fall; this is the path that will bear fruit.

Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank you for your attention. Please accept these words as an expression of my concern as Pastor of the Church and my respect and affection for the Brazilian people. Fraternal relations between people, and cooperation in building a more just society – these are not an idealistic dream, but the fruit of a concerted effort on the part of all, in service of the common good. I encourage you in this commitment to the common good, a commitment which demands of everyone wisdom, prudence and generosity. I entrust you to our Heavenly Father, asking him, through the intercession of Our Lady of Aparecida, to pour out his gifts on each of you, on your families and on your communities and workplaces. From my heart, I ask God to bless you. Thank you very much.

[1]“Il nostro tempo”, in: *La vita soprannaturale e il mondo moderno* (Rio de Janeiro, 1956), p. 106.
