



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT TO AMERICA

MASS FOR THE FAITHFUL OF MEXICO

HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II

*Hermanos Rodríguez Racetrack in Mexico City
Sunday, 24 January 1999*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. *"Be united in the same mind and the same judgement" (1 Cor 1:10).*

This morning the Apostle Paul's words encourage us to live intensely this meeting of faith, which is the Eucharistic celebration, on "holy Sunday, honoured by the Lord's Resurrection, the first fruits of all the other days" (*Dies Domini*, n. 19). I am filled with great happiness to be here, presiding at Holy Mass.

In God's plan, Sunday is the day when the Christian community gathers round the table of the Word of God and the table of the Eucharist. At this important assembly we are called by the Lord to renew and deepen the gift of faith. Yes, brothers and sisters, Sunday is the day of faith and hope, the day of happiness and of joyful response to Christ the Saviour, the day of holiness! At this fraternal gathering we live and celebrate the presence of the Teacher who promised: *"I am with you always; yes, to the end of time"* (Mt 28:20).

2. I would now like to express my gratitude for the kind words of Cardinal Norberto Rivera Carrera, Archbishop of Mexico City and Primate of Mexico, in presenting the reality of this beloved ecclesial community. I also affectionately greet Cardinal Ernesto Corripio Ahumada, Archbishop emeritus of Mexico City, as well as the other Mexican Cardinals and Bishops and those who have come from other parts of the American continent and from Rome. The Pope encourages you in the exercise of your ministry and urges you to spare no effort in courageously preaching the Gospel of Christ.

With great esteem I also greet the priests and consecrated men and women, encouraging them to sanctify themselves by their irrevocable commitment to God through their service to the Church and to the new evangelization, and by always

following their Pastors' directives. It will take great effort to proclaim Christ more effectively to others, especially to the most marginalized. I am also thinking of the many cloistered nuns who pray for the Church, for the Pope, for the Bishops and priests, for missionaries and for all the faithful.

With great affection I greet the many indigenous peoples from various regions of Mexico who are attending this celebration. The Pope feels very close to all of you; he admires the values of your cultures and encourages you not to lose hope in surmounting the difficult situations you are experiencing. I invite you to strive to achieve your own development and to work for your own advancement. Build your future and that of your children with responsibility! For this reason, I ask all the faithful of this nation to commit themselves to helping and supporting the neediest among you. Each and every one of the children of this land must have what they need to live a dignified life. All the members of Mexican society have equal dignity since they are God's children; for that reason they deserve full respect and have the right to fulfil themselves in justice and in peace.

The Pope would also like his words to reach the sick who have been unable to be with us here. I feel very close to them as I share Christ's comfort and peace with them. I ask them, while they are seeking to recover their health, to offer up their illness for the Church, in the full knowledge of the saving value and evangelizing power of human suffering when it is joined with that of the Lord Jesus.

In a special way I thank the civil authorities for their presence at this celebration. The Pope encourages you to continue to work diligently for the common good of all, with a deep sense of justice, according to the responsibilities entrusted to you.

3. In the first reading the prophet says with reference to Israel's expectation of the Messiah: "*The people who walked in the darkness have seen a great light*" (Is 9:1). This light is Christ, brought here almost 500 years ago by the first 12 Franciscan evangelizers from Spain. Today we are witnesses to a deeply-rooted faith and the abundant fruits that the sacrifice and self-denial of so many missionaries have yielded.

As the Second Vatican Council reminds us, "Christ is the light of nations" (*Lumen gentium*, n. 1). May this light illumine Mexican society, its families, schools and universities, its fields and its cities. May the values of the Gospel inspire its leaders to serve their fellow citizens, with constant concern for those most in need.

Faith in Christ is an integral part of the Mexican nation, indelibly inscribed in its history. Do not let this light of faith be extinguished! Mexico still needs it in order to build a more just and fraternal society, in solidarity with those who have nothing and hope for a better future.

The world today sometimes forgets the transcendent values of the human person: his dignity and freedom, his inviolable right to life and the priceless gift of the family, in a social climate of solidarity. Human relations are not always based on the principles of charity and mutual aid. On the contrary, other criteria prevail, endangering the harmonious development and integral progress of individuals and peoples. For this reason Christians must be the "soul" of this world: may they fill it with spirit, infuse life into it and cooperate in building a new society governed by love and truth.

Dear sons and daughters, even in the most difficult moments of your history you have always known how to recognize

the Teacher "who has the words of eternal life" (cf. Jn 6:68). Bring Christ's word to those who still do not know it! Have the courage to bear witness to the Gospel in the streets and squares, in the valleys and mountains of this nation! Promote the new evangelization according to the Church's guidelines.

4. In the responsorial psalm we sang: "*The Lord is my light and my salvation*" (Ps 26 [27]:1). Whom should we fear if he is with us? Be courageous, then. Seek the Lord, and in him you will find peace. Christians are called to be the "light of the world" (Mt 5:14), enlightening all society with the witness of their actions.

When a person resolutely sets out on the way of faith, he ignores the seductions which divide the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, and pays no attention to those who, turning their back on the truth, preach division and hatred (cf. 2 Pt 2:1-1). Sons and daughters of Mexico and of all America, do not look for the truth of life in deceptive and seemingly novel ideologies: "*Jesus is the genuine newness which surpasses all human expectations and such he remains for ever*" (*Incarnationis mysterium*, n. 1).

5. At this racetrack, transformed today into a vast church, Jesus' words as he began his preaching resound with power: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt 4:17). From her beginning, the Church faithfully transmits this message of conversion, so that we can all live a more virtuous life, in accordance with the spirit of the Gospel. The call to conversion becomes more insistent during this time of preparation for the Great Jubilee in which we will commemorate the mystery of the Incarnation of God's Son 2,000 years ago.

At the beginning of this liturgical year, I pointed out in the Bull *Incarnationis mysterium* that "*the period of the Jubilee introduces us to the vigorous language which the divine pedagogy of salvation uses to lead man to conversion and repentance. These are the beginning and the path of man's healing*" (n. 2). This is why the Pope urges you to turn your hearts to Christ. The whole Church must begin the new millennium by helping her children to purify themselves from sin and evil; she must extend her horizons of holiness and fidelity to participate in the grace of Christ, who has called us to be children of the light and to share in eternal glory (cf. Col 1:13).

6. "*Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men*" (Mt 4:19).

These words of Jesus, which we have just heard, are repeated throughout history and in every corner of the world. Like the Master, I extend to everyone, especially to the young, the same invitation to follow Christ. Dear young people, one day Jesus called Simon Peter and Andrew. They were fishermen and left their nets to follow him. Christ is certainly calling some of you to follow him and to commit yourselves totally to the cause of the Gospel. Do not be afraid to accept the Lord's invitation! Do not let your nets prevent you from following in Jesus' footsteps! Be generous; do not fail to respond to the Master who calls. Follow him, so that you may be fishers of men like the Apostles.

I also encourage the mothers and fathers of families to be the first to nurture the seed of a vocation in their children, by giving them the example of Christ's love in their homes, by their

efforts and sacrifices, by their commitment and responsibility. Dear parents: raise your children according to the principles of the Gospel so that they will become the evangelizers of the third millennium. The Church needs more evangelizers. All of America, of which you are a part, and especially this beloved nation, has a great responsibility for the future.

For a long period Mexico received selfless and generous evangelization from many witnesses of Christ. Let us mention just a few of these eminent figures, such as Juan de Zumárraga and Vasco de Quiroga. Others evangelized by their witness unto death, like the martyred children of Tlaxcala, Bl. Cristóbal, Antonio and Juan, or Bl. Miguel Pro and many other priests, religious and lay martyrs. Still others were confessors, such as Bl. Bishop Rafael Guizar.

7. To conclude, I would like to turn my thoughts to Tepeyac, to Our Lady of Guadalupe, Star of the first and the new evangelization of America. To her I entrust the pilgrim Church in Mexico and the American continent, and I fervently ask her to guide her children, so that they will enter the third millennium with faith and hope.

Under her motherly care I place the young people of this country, as well as the innocent lives of children, especially those who are in danger of not being born. I entrust the cause of life to her loving protection: may no Mexican dare to harm the precious and sacred gift of life in its mother's womb!

To the maternal intercession of Our Lady of Guadalupe I commend the poor, with their needs and desires. Before her, with her mestizo face, I place the hopes and longings of the indigenous peoples with their own culture, who hope to achieve their legitimate aspirations and the development to which they have a right. I commend the African Americans to her as well, and I place in her hands the workers, the employers and all who collaborate by their activity in the progress of contemporary society.

Most Holy Virgin! Like Bl. Juan Diego, may we bring your image with us impressed on our journey of life and proclaim the Good News of Christ to all peoples.

At the end of his homily the Holy Father added extemporaneously:

This preaching should be emphasized. The Pope preached and the whole assembly preached with him by their prayers. Here on my left is a group of children who preached in this assembly with special force. Thank you all.

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