



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY
OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO RIO DE JANEIRO, ON THE OCCASION OF THE
2nd WORLD MEETING FOR FAMILIES
(OCTOBER 2-6, 1997)

WELCOME CEREMONY AT GALEÃO AIRBASE

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II

2 October 1997

Mr President,

1. I have the great pleasure of offering Your Excellency, as the head and highest representative of the great Brazilian nation, my most respectful greetings. I cordially thank you for your kind welcome. It is an honour and a pleasure for me to be in Brazil again, among these people whose marvellous hospitality and contagious joy are well known to me.

I also greet you, venerable Brothers in the Episcopate. First, I greet the Cardinal Archbishop of São Sebastião do Rio de Janeiro and his Auxiliary Bishops, whose Archdiocese is offering me hospitality within the context of the Successor of Peter's Second World Meeting with Families; my affectionate greetings also go to the President of the Pontifical Council for the Family and to the entire Latin American Episcopal Council, as well as to the Presidency of the National Bishops' Conference of Brazil who, as a sign of fraternal solidarity, have come here to collaborate and to gather the fruits of these days of fraternal sharing and, with God's help, to bring it to the countries where they carry out their ministry. I also address my affectionate greeting to the members representing the family apostolate, who have come here to meet me with this friendly group of children and young people. Truly, let me tell you ... I came here for your sake, I came to be with you and I want to be with you!

With great affection I greet the representatives of the Brazilian people, the members of the Government, the civil and military dignitaries, and all those who have gathered here. I thank you

very much for having wished to receive me so kindly on my arrival, during this apostolic pilgrimage which I consider a part of my universal ministry. The dynamism of our faith increasingly awakens a sense of brotherhood and of harmonious collaboration for a peaceful society in order to motivate and consolidate forces for an orderly progress that reaches all families and social classes, in conformity with the principles of justice and Christian charity.

In this context, I would also like to extend the expression of my esteem and affection to two groups in the country. In the first place, to the indigenous peoples descended from those who lived on this land before the arrival of the explorers and colonizers. With their culture they have contributed to instilling a deep sense of family in Brazilian culture, of respect for ancestors, of intimacy and domestic affection. They deserve our full attention so that they may live their culture with dignity. I express the same sentiments to the African Brazilians, a numerous and highly significant part of the population of this land. Because of their notable presence in the country's history and cultural formation, these Brazilians of African origin deserve, have a right to and can justly demand and expect the greatest respect for the basic elements of their culture so that they may continue with these elements to enrich the culture of the nation in which they are completely integrated as fully-fledged citizens.

Brothers and sisters of Brazil, of America and of the whole world! I invoke upon you all an abundance of divine grace: may God bless you and pour out peace and prosperity upon the nations of all the continents. May Christ the Redeemer who, from the top of Corcovado, opens his arms in the form of a cross, enlighten families, Ecclesial Communities and all temporal society with the light from on high and grant everyone, through the intercession of Our Lady of Guadalupe, patroness of Latin America, everything good that their hearts desire. Thank you!

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