



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE BISHOPS OF MEXICO
(GROUP II - NORTHEASTERN AND CENTRAL MEXICO)
ON THEIR "AD LIMINA APOSTOLORUM" VISIT**

Thursday, 15 September 2005

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate,

I am filled with deep joy to receive you on the occasion of your *ad limina* visit with which you express your communion and love for the Successor of Peter.

I thank Archbishop Alberto Suárez Inda of Morelia for his cordial greeting on your behalf, Pastors of the Ecclesiastical Circumscriptions of Monterrey, Morelia and San Luis Potosí.

Mexico is facing the challenge of transforming its social structures to make them conform better to the dignity of the person and to his or her fundamental rights. Catholics, who still represent the majority of the population, are called to collaborate in this task as they discover their commitment of faith and the unifying significance of their presence in the world.

The opposite would be "one of the gravest errors of our time... the dichotomy between the faith which many profess and the practice of their daily lives" (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 43).

It is a cause of serious concern that in certain circles, greed for power has led to the deterioration of healthy forms of coexistence and of government as well as to phenomena of corruption, impunity, the infiltration of the drug trade and organized crime. All this paves the way to various forms of violence, to indifference and to contempt for the inviolable value of life.

In this regard, the "social sins" of our epoch are clearly denounced in the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America*. These sins express "a deep crisis caused by the loss of a sense

of God and the absence of those moral principles which should guide the life of every human person. In the absence of moral points of reference, an unbridled greed for wealth and power takes over, obscuring any Gospel-based vision of social reality" (n. 56).

In Mexico too, many people live in a situation of poverty. However, the faith in God and the religious sense of many of the faithful go hand in hand with a wealth of humanity, hospitality, brotherliness and solidarity.

These values are threatened by emigration abroad, where many work in precarious conditions, in a vulnerable state, and thus have difficulty in coming to grips with a cultural context different from their own social and religious identity.

Wherever immigrants meet with a warm welcome from an Ecclesial Community that helps them to settle into the new reality, this phenomenon is in a certain way positive and encourages the evangelization of other cultures.

With its in-depth examination of migration, the *Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for America* contributed to the discovery that, over and above social and financial factors, an appreciable unity stems from a common faith and fosters fraternal communion and solidarity. It is the result of the presence of the living Jesus Christ and the encounter with him in various forms that were and are present in America's history.

Human mobility, therefore, is a pastoral priority in relations of cooperation with the Churches of North America.

Many of the baptized, influenced by countless trends in thought and behaviour, become indifferent to the Gospel values. Moreover, they are even induced to behave in ways opposed to the Christian vision of life which makes membership in an Ecclesial Community difficult.

Although they claim to be Catholic, they in fact live far from the faith; they are giving up religious practices and little by little are losing their own identity as believers, with moral and spiritual consequences of a different kind.

This pastoral challenge has impelled you, dear Brothers, not only to seek solutions in order to point out the errors in these trends and to defend the content of the faith, but also and above all to point out the transcendental richness of the Christian event as an event that gives life true meaning and makes it possible to talk to, listen to and cooperate with everyone.

Far from leaving you indifferent, all this, combined with the activity of the sects and new religious groups in America, must be an incentive to your particular Churches to offer the faithful more personalized religious attention, to consolidate structures of communion and to propose a purified

popular religiosity so as to give new life to every Catholic's faith (cf. *ibid.*, n. 73).

The responsible formation of Catholics in the faith is an urgent obligation in order to help them live in the world with joy and courage. "All pastoral initiatives must be set in relation to holiness" (*Novo Millennio Ineunte*, n. 30). This is a priority task in the ongoing evangelization of the baptized.

Catechesis together with the teaching of religion and morals must therefore be founded increasingly on the experience and knowledge of Jesus Christ through the living witness of those who have encountered him, in order to awaken the desire to follow him and serve him with all one's heart and mind.

"It is important, however, that what we propose, with the help of God, should be profoundly rooted in contemplation and prayer. Ours is a time of continual movement which often leads to restlessness, with the risk of "doing for the sake of doing" (*ibid.*, n. 15).

In pastoral practice, all this implies the need to revise our mindset, our attitudes and our conduct, as well as to broaden our horizons, striving to share and to work with enthusiasm to respond to the great questions of men and women today.

As a missionary Church, we are all called to understand the challenges that our postmodern culture poses to the new evangelization of the Continent. The Church's dialogue with the culture of our time is vital, to the Church herself and to the world.

Before concluding, I pray the Lord that this meeting of ours will strengthen your unity as Pastors of the Church in Mexico.

At the same time, I ask you to convey my affectionate greeting to the priests, the religious communities, the pastoral agents and all the diocesan faithful, and to encourage them always to bear an authentic witness of Christian life in contemporary society.

I entrust your pastoral work to Our Lady, Mother of Guadalupe, and at the same time I joyfully impart my Apostolic Blessing to you all.