



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE THIRD GROUP OF BISHOPS FROM MEXICO
ON THEIR "AD LIMINA" VISIT**

Friday, 23 September 2005

I am delighted to receive you today, Bishops of God's Church who have come on your *ad limina* visit from the metropolitan sees of Jalapa, Mexico, Puebla, Tlalnepanitla and the suffragan Dioceses.

This venerable institution helps keep alive the close bonds of communion that unite every Bishop with the Successor of Peter. Your presence here also makes me feel close to the priests, men and women religious and faithful of your particular Churches.

I am grateful for the kind words of Cardinal Norberto Rivera Carrera, Archbishop of Mexico, expressing your affection and esteem and telling me of your worries and your pastoral programmes. I reciprocate by praying to the Lord that faith, hope and charity and the courageous witness of all Christians may continue to grow in your Dioceses and throughout Mexico.

As successors of the Apostles, grounded in the power of the Lord's promises and the help of his Spirit, you are called to be the first to carry out the mission he has entrusted to his Church. As individuals and as a College, you constantly analyze Mexican society because you know that the episcopal ministry requires you to assess temporal realities in order to illumine them with the faith.

In this regard, the Bishop watches over his faithful and all society in the perspective of the Gospel. Listening to "the Spirit's word to the Churches" (Rv 2: 7), you feel it is your duty to make a serene discernment of the various circumstances, initiatives or passivity which, regrettably, sometimes affect the People of God, but at the same time, without neglecting society's serious problems and deepest aspirations.

Central Mexico is the region where the ancient indigenous peoples settled. Here the missionary activity of the Church began and spread out to the other regions.

City life is strongly marked by the coexistence of the inhabitants' numerous cultures and customs. The important financial, university and cultural centres are found in the great metropolises as well as the political and legal institutions whose influence extends to the rest of the Nation.

At the same time, life in them is complex because of the different social classes that the diocesan pastoral care must attend to impartially, giving priority to those in situations of extreme poverty, loneliness or marginalization.

All these social groups shape the city's features. They are a continual challenge to pastoral ministry, whose planning must also allow for the ever greater number of your brothers and sisters who emigrate from the rural to the urban environment in search of a more dignified life.

This reality with its pressing problems calls for the sensitivity of its Pastors. As the Second Vatican Council reminds us, "We must be aware of and understand the aspirations, the yearnings and the often dramatic features of the world in which we live" (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 4).

In this context, the Bishop must foster and consolidate communion so that the faithful feel authentically called to live a community life and to make the Church "the home and the school of communion" (*Novo Millennio Ineunte*, n. 43). In such a way, the Church will be able to respond to the world's expectations, witnessing to the Christian experience of unity.

I encourage you, therefore, in this most demanding task in which the Christian sharing of goods must never be forgotten.

Your pastoral ministry must be addressed to everyone: to the faithful who take an active part in the community life of the Diocese as well as to individuals who have moved away from it and are seeking the meaning of their own life.

Consequently, I ask you to continue tirelessly in your role of teaching and proclaiming Christ's Gospel without flagging (cf. *Christus Dominus*, n. 11).

In presenting the Word of God to enlighten the consciences of the faithful, Bishops must use a language and manner suited to our time, if it is to be relevant "to those difficulties and questions which men find especially worrying and intimidating" (*ibid.*, n. 13).

In contemporary society, which shows such visible signs of secularism, we must not give in to despair or a lack of enthusiasm in pastoral projects. Remember that the Holy Spirit gives you the strength you need. Trust in him who is the "Lord and Giver of life".

Priests are close collaborators in your pastoral ministry. They share in your very important mission, and furthermore, "in the celebration of all the sacraments... priests are hierarchically united with the Bishop in various ways and so make him present in a certain sense in individual assemblies of the faithful (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 5).

You must devote your best efforts and energy to your priests. I therefore encourage you always to be close to each one of them and to build a relationship of priestly friendship with them, after the example of the Good Shepherd.

Help them to be men of persevering prayer, both in contemplative silence which protects us from the noise and dispersion of multiple activities and in the devout and daily celebration of the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours, which the Church has entrusted to them for the good of the entire Body of Christ.

The prayer of a priest is a requirement of his pastoral ministry. This is because no community can forego the witness of a prayerful priest who proclaims transcendence and is immersed in God's mystery.

Take an interest in the particular situation of each priest, encouraging him to journey on the path of priestly holiness with joy and hope, offering him the help he needs and fostering brotherly relations among all priests. May no priest lack the means he needs in order to live his sublime vocation and ministry with dignity.

Likewise, pay special attention to the formation of seminarians and promote the pastoral care of vocations with enthusiasm.

Confronted by today's changing and complex panorama, the virtue of hope is subject to harsh trials in the community of believers. For this very reason, we must be apostles who are filled with hope and joyful trust in God's promises.

God never abandons his people; indeed, he invites them to conversion so that his Kingdom may become a reality. The Kingdom of God does not only mean that God exists, that he is alive, but also that he is present and active in the world. He is the most intimate and crucial reality in every act of human life, every moment of history.

The planning and implementation of pastoral programmes must therefore reflect trust in God's loving presence in the world. This will help lay Catholics face the growing secularism and take part responsibly in temporal matters, in the light of the social teaching of the Church.

Dear Brothers, once again I assure you of my deep communion in prayer, with steadfast hope in the future of your Dioceses that show great vitality. May the Lord grant you the joy of serving him,

governing in his Name the diocesan Churches entrusted to your care. May Our Lady of Guadalupe, Queen and Mother of Mexico, go with you and protect you always.

With deep affection, I impart my Apostolic Blessing to you and all the faithful of your Dioceses.

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