



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE BISHOPS OF ARGENTINA
ON THEIR "AD LIMINA" VISIT**

Saturday, 14 March 2009

*Your Eminence,
Dear Brothers in the Episcopate,*

It is a cause of deep joy to me to welcome you at this meeting with the Successor of Peter and the Head of the Episcopal College. I am grateful for the kind words of Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, Archbishop of Buenos Aires and President of the Argentine Bishops' Conference, conveying the sentiments of all. Through you I would also like to greet all the clergy, the religious communities and lay people of your dioceses, expressing to them my appreciation and closeness, as well as my constant encouragement in the exciting task of evangelization which they carry out with great devotion and generosity.

You have come here to venerate the tombs of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and to share with the Bishop of Rome the joys and hopes, the experiences and difficulties of your episcopal ministry. The *ad limina* visit is a significant event in the life of all who have been entrusted with a portion of the People of God, for in it they demonstrate and strengthen their communion with the Roman Pontiff.

The Lord founded the Church so that it might be "a sign and instrument... of communion with God and of unity among all men" (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 1). The Church in herself is a mystery of communion, "a people brought into unity from the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit" (*ibid.*, n. 4). In fact, God has desired to bring the fullness of salvation to all people by making them share in the gift of the Redemption of Christ and thus enter into communion of life with the Trinity.

The episcopal ministry is at the service of the unity and communion of the whole Mystical Body of Christ. The Bishop, who is the visible source and foundation of unity in his particular Church, has

the obligation of fostering and safeguarding the unity of the faith and of upholding the discipline which is common to the whole Church, and, in addition, of schooling the faithful in the love of all their brethren (cf. *ibid.*, n. 23).

I would like to express my gratitude to you for your determination to preserve and strengthen unity in the heart of your Bishops' Conference and in your diocesan communities. The words of Our Lord "that they may all be one" (Jn 17: 21) must be a constant source of inspiration in your pastoral activity which will, without any doubt, redound into greater apostolic effectiveness. In addition, this unity which you must foster intensely and visibly, will be a source of comfort in the serious responsibility that has been entrusted to you. Thanks to affective and effective collegiality, no Bishop stands alone for he is always and closely bound to Christ the Good Shepherd and also, by virtue of his episcopal ordination and hierarchical communion, to his Brothers in the episcopate and to the man whom the Lord has chosen as Successor of Peter (cf. John Paul II, *Pastores Gregis*, n. 8). I would now like to tell you in a special way that you can count on my full support, my daily prayers and my spiritual closeness in your efforts and commitment to make the Church "the home and the school of communion" (John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, n. 43).

This spirit of communion has a privileged application in the Bishop's relationship with his priests. I am well acquainted with your desire to pay greater attention to your priests, and, in line with the Second Vatican Council, I encourage you to be solicitous, showing fatherly and brotherly love, "for the welfare spiritual, intellectual, and material of your priests, so that they may live holy and pious lives, and exercise a faithful and fruitful ministry" (*Christus Dominus*, n. 16). Likewise, I urge you to show charity and caution, when you have to correct teachings, attitudes or forms of behaviour that do not befit the priestly condition of your closest collaborators and, moreover, could damage and confuse the faith and the Christian life of the faithful.

The fundamental role played by priests must induce you to make a great effort to promote vocations to the priesthood. In this regard, it will be appropriate to plan a more effective matrimonial and family pastoral ministry which takes into account the vocational dimension of the Christian, and a more daring youth ministry which helps young men respond generously to God's call. It is also necessary to intensify the formation of seminarians in all its dimensions: human, spiritual, intellectual, emotional and pastoral, and further, to carry out the effective and demanding process of the discernment of candidates to sacred orders.

In this perspective of deepening communion in the Church it is of supreme importance to recognize, appreciate and encourage the participation of religious in the evangelizing activity of the diocese, enriching it with the contribution of their respective charisms.

By virtue of their Baptism, the faithful are also called to cooperate in building up the Body of Christ. It is therefore necessary to enable them to have a more vivid experience of Jesus Christ and of the mystery of his love. Constant contact with the Lord through an intense life of prayer and a proper

spiritual and doctrinal formation will increase in all Christians the joy of believing and celebrating their faith as well as happiness in belonging to the Church, thus impelling them to participate actively in the mission of proclaiming the Good News.

Dear Brothers, I assure you once again of my closeness in my daily prayers, together with my firm hope in the progress and spiritual renewal of your communities. May the Lord grant you the joy of serving him, guiding on his behalf the flock that has been entrusted to you. May the Virgin Mary, with her title "Our Lady of Luján", accompany you and protect you and your diocesan faithful always. With great affection I impart a special Apostolic Blessing to you all.

© Copyright 2009 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana