



The Holy See

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

Monday, 18 May 2009

*Your Eminence,
Dear Brothers in the Episcopate,*

With my heart full of the joy of Easter, a gift of the Risen Lord, and as Successor of Peter, I offer you a cordial welcome while "I give thanks to God always for you" (1 Cor 1: 4). I am grateful to Archbishop Héctor Miguel Cabrejos Vidarte, Archbishop of Trujillo and President of the Peruvian Bishops' Conference, for the respectful words that he has addressed to me on behalf of you all. I recognize in them the charity and dedication with which you tend your particular Churches.

The visit *ad limina Apostolorum* is an important opportunity for reinforcing the bonds of communion with the Roman Pontiff and among yourselves, in the knowledge that the unity of the whole Church must always be present in your pastoral efforts so that your communities, like living stones, may contribute to building up the whole of the People of God (cf. 1 Pt2: 4-5). In fact, "Bishops, as legitimate successors of the Apostles and members of the Episcopal College, should appreciate that they are closely united to each other and should be solicitous for all the Churches" (*Christus Dominus*, n. 6). Yet experience tells us that this unity is never achieved once and for all and that it must be ceaselessly built up and perfected, without surrendering to the objective and subjective difficulties but rather with the determination to reveal the Catholic Church's one and only true face.

However, it is also indispensable today, as it has been throughout the Church's history, to foster the spirit of communion, making the most of the qualities of each one of the brethren whom divine Providence has desired to set beside us. In this way the different members of Christ's body succeed in helping each other to carry out their daily tasks (cf. 1 Co 12: 24-26; Phil 2: 1-4; Gal 6: 2-3). It is therefore necessary that Bishops feel the constant need to keep alive and express in practice their collegial affection since it provides "valuable support in our efforts to read carefully

the signs of the times and to discern clearly what the Spirit is saying to the Churches" (John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Gregis*, n. 73).

Authentic unity in the Church is always an inexhaustible source of an evangelizing spirit. In this regard I know that in your pastoral programmes you are incorporating the missionary impetus promoted by the Fifth General Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops' Conferences which took place in Aparecida, and especially by the "Continental Mission", with a view to each Catholic aspiring to holiness in a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus, loving him with perseverance and conforming his or her life to Gospel criteria so that ecclesial communities of intense Christian life may be created. Of course, a Church on a mission relativizes her internal problems and looks to the future with hope and enthusiasm. It is a matter of relaunching her missionary spirit, not for fear of the future but rather because the Church is a dynamic reality and the true disciple of Jesus Christ enjoys passing on freely to others his divine Word and sharing with them the love that flows from his open wound on the Cross (cf. Mt 10: 8; Jn 13: 34-35; 19: 33-34; 1 Cor 9: 16). In fact, when the beauty and truth of Christ win our hearts, we feel the joy of being his disciples and take on with conviction the mission of proclaiming his redemptive message. In this respect, I urge you to convoke all the people of your dioceses so that they may walk with Christ and always shine with the light of his Face, particularly those brethren who, perhaps because they feel unappreciated or receive insufficient attention in their spiritual and material needs, seek responses to their worries in other religious experiences.

You yourselves, dear Brothers in the episcopate, in following the outstanding example of St Toribio de Mogrovejo and many other holy Pastors, are called to live as daring disciples and missionaries of the Lord. Diligent pastoral visits to the ecclesial communities even to the humblest and most remote prolonged prayer, the careful preparation of homilies, fatherly attention for the priests, families, young people, catechists and the other pastoral workers are the best means of kindling in everyone the ardent desire to be messengers of the Good News of salvation, while at the same time opening the doors of your hearts to those around you, especially the sick and the neediest.

Since her origins, the Church in your nation has relied on the beneficial presence of self-sacrificing members of consecrated life. It is of the utmost importance that you continue to accompany and to animate in a brotherly manner the men and women religious present in your particular Churches so that, living faithfully the evangelical counsels in accordance with their own charism, they may continue to bear a lively witness of love for God, of firm adherence to the Magisterium of the Church and of collaboration with the diocesan pastoral programmes.

Above all, I am now thinking of the Peruvians who are out of work and who lack appropriate educational and health-care assistance or who live on the outskirts of the great cities or in isolated areas. I am likewise thinking of those who have fallen into the clutches of drug addiction or violence. We cannot be impervious to these brothers and sisters of ours who are the weakest and

beloved by God, always bearing in mind that the love of Christ impels us (cf. 2 Cor 5: 14; Rm 12: 9; 13: 8; 15: 1-3).

At the end of this cordial meeting, I ask the Lord Jesus to illuminate you in your pastoral service to the People of God. You will lose heart at times but Christ's words to St Paul must comfort you in the exercise of your responsibility: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor 12: 9).

With this lively hope, I ask you to convey my affectionate greeting to the Bishops emeritus, the priests, deacons and seminarians, the religious communities and the faithful of Peru.

May Mary Most Holy, Our Lady of Evangelization, always protect you with her maternal love. As I invoke upon you her intercession and that of all the Saints, especially those venerated among you, I warmly impart my Apostolic Blessing to you all.

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