



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE BISHOPS OF THE BRAZILIAN EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE
(EAST I REGION) ON THEIR "AD LIMINA" VISITA**

*Hall of the Swiss, Papal Summer Residence, Castel Gandolfo
Saturday, 25 September 2010*

Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate,

It is with great pleasure I welcome you during your *ad limina Apostolorum* visit. You have come here on behalf of and for your dioceses of the East i Region, in order to strengthen the ties that bind you to the Successor of Peter. Bishop Rafael Cifuentes highlighted this point too in his greeting to me on your behalf for which I thank him. I deeply appreciate the prayers that every day you raise to Heaven for me and for the whole Church from the various family, parish, religious and diocesan communities of the Ecclesiastical Provinces of Rio de Janeiro and Niterói. May the goodness of the Lord descend upon each and every one of you: may "the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you: The Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace" (Num 6: 25-26). Yes, dear Brothers, may the brightness of God shine out from the whole of your being and your life, as happened to Moses (cf. Ex 34: 29 and 35) and especially since "with unveiled face", we, who are now "beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit" (2 Cor 3: 18). This is what the Council Fathers felt when, at the end of the Second Vatican Council, they presented the Church in these terms: "Rich with a long past ever living in her, and marching on toward human perfection in time and the ultimate destinies of history and of life, the Church is the real youth of the world.... Look upon the Church and you will find in her the face of Christ, the genuine, humble, and wise Hero, the Prophet of truth and love, the Companion and Friend of youth" (*Message of the Second Vatican Council to Youth*). In allowing the face of Christ to shine, the Church is the youth of the world.

However it will be very difficult to convince anyone of this if the younger generation is not reflected in her. For this reason, as you will certainly have realized, a recurrent theme in my conversations with you is the situation of young people in the various dioceses. Trusting in divine Providence which presides lovingly over future history, never ceasing to prepare for future times, I am glad to

see the future shining in the young people of today. Venerable Pope John Paul II, seeing Rome become "young with the young" in the Year 2000, already hailed them as "morning watchmen" (Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, n. 9; cf. *Homily at the Prayer Vigil for the 11th World Youth Day*, 19 August 2000, n. 6), with the task of reawakening their brothers and sisters so that they might put out into the deep in the vast ocean of the third millennium. And, to demonstrate this, we recall the scene with the long lines of young people waiting in the Circus Maximus to go to confession. These young people restored to many priests their trust in the sacrament of Penance.

As you well know, beloved Pastors, the core of the spiritual crisis of our time derives from the loss of the sense of the grace of forgiveness. When this is not recognized as real and effective, there is a tendency to free the person from guilt, in such a way that the conditions for his or her existence never occur. Yet, in their heart of hearts, people thus "liberated" know that it is not true, that sin does exist and that they themselves are sinners. Although certain currents of psychology have great difficulty in admitting that in the feeling of guilt there may also be a real sin or guilt resulting from it. They have become so benumbed that they do not feel a sense of guilt even when they should and must seek with every possible means to recover this sense of guilt, because it is necessary in the spiritual order for the salvation of the soul. Indeed, Jesus did not come to save those who have already freed themselves on their own, believing that they no longer stand in need of him, but rather those who feel that they are sinners and need him (cf. Lk 5: 31-32).

The truth is that we all need him, as the divine Sculptor who removes the accumulated layers of dust and dirt that obscure the image of God within us. We stand in need of forgiveness, which is the fulcrum of every true reform: the renewal of the person in his inmost depths thus becomes the centre of the renewal of the community. When the dust and filth, which makes God's image within me unrecognizable, are removed, I become truly like the other. He or she in turn is an image of God; and above all, I am likened to Christ, who is the image of God free from any blemish or limitation, the prototype on which we have all been created. St Paul expresses this in a very concrete way: "it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Gal 2: 20). I am snatched away from my isolation and welcomed into a new community-subject; and my "self" is inserted into the "self" of Christ thereby being united with that of all my brethren. Only on the basis of this deep renewal of the individual is the Church born, as well as the community that unites and sustains people in life and in death. She is a companion on the ascent, in the realization of that purification which makes us capable of reaching the true heights of our humanity, of the company of God. As purification is gradually brought about, even the climb arduous at the start becomes ever more joyful. This infectious joy must shine out from the Church increasingly, involving the world, through the young people of the world.

Venerable Brothers, we cannot carry this out with our own strength; we need the light and grace that come from God's Spirit, that act in the depths of hearts and consciences. May they sustain you and your dioceses in the formation of minds and hearts! Please convey my affectionate greeting to your young people and their counsellors, to the priests, religious and lay people. May

they raise their gaze to the Immaculate Conception, *Nossa Senhora Aparecida*, to whose protection I entrust you. I impart a heartfelt Apostolic Blessing to you, which I extend to all your diocesan faithful.

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