



The Holy See

**LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL I
TO CARDINAL JOSEPH RATZINGER,
LEGATE EXTRAORDINARY
TO THE MARIAN CONGRESS IN ECUADOR**

*To Our Venerable Brother
Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church
Joseph Ratzinger
Archbishop of Munich and Freising,*

The symphony of praise with which the Most Blessed Virgin Mary is customarily honoured throughout the world will be more sublimely extolled—as far as one may foresee—during this month of September in the State of Ecuador, and particularly in the city of Guayaquil. There, in order to complete and terminate the Marian Year that had been proclaimed, a religious Congress from the whole nation will be held in honour of the Mother of God. The memory flourishes there of a similar Congress held in that same city twenty years ago, which for very beautiful ceremonies and for abundance of spiritual fruit is still remarkable.

By a truly wise decision, taking into account the demands and the needs of this age, two documents of the Roman Pontiff's Magisterium are proposed, so that during these celebrations they may be more deeply explored. One of these documents is "[Marialis Cultus](#)"; the other is "[Evangelii Nuntiandi](#)". Therefore a double result is expected from this Congress: an increase of genuine piety towards the Mother of God and a greater eagerness to spread in every direction the saving message of Christ.

Indeed, we embrace the people of Ecuador in sincere charity; and desire in some way to participate in these solemnities in order that greater moment and lustre may attend them. Wherefore, by these letters, we choose, make, and proclaim you our Legate Extraordinary, committing to you the office of presiding in our name and with our authority at these Marian celebrations. We have no doubt but that you will skilfully and fruitfully fulfil the office accredited to

you, because of the richness of sacred doctrine which commends you, and the ardent love for the Mother of Christ and our Mother for which you are known.

Therefore, may the Marian festival of Guayaquil shine forth with a certain new splendour, at which St Augustine, amazed, exclaimed: "For whose mind suffices to think, whose tongue suffices to declare not only that in the beginning was the Word who had no beginning of being born, but also that the Word was made flesh choosing a virgin whom he would make his mother, making the mother whom he would preserve a virgin... What is this? Who would speak? Who would be silent? An astonishing saying: about that which we cannot speak we are not permitted to remain silent, by crying out we preach that which we cannot comprehend by thought" (St Augustine, *Sermon* 215.3; *PL*: 38,1073).

We hope and beseech God that these solemnities may profitably overflow in the life of each man and of society. To You, Venerable Brother, as also to the sharer of your dignity, Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church Paul Munoz Vega, who with his assistants undertook many anxieties in preparing this Congress, to the other prelates, public officials, priests, religious, and faithful who for that purpose will be congregated there, we gladly bestow the Apostolic Blessing, the token of heavenly gifts.

Given at St Peter's, Rome, on the first day of September, in the year 1978, the first of our Pontificate.

IOANNES PAULUS PP. I