



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF COLOMBIA

*To Archbishop Alberto Giraldo Jaramillo of Medellín
President of the Bishops' Conference of Colombia*

1. A century has now passed since 22 June 1902, when the bishops, the civil authorities and the people of Colombia, stirred by deep sentiments of love and devotion, consecrated the Republic to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, promising to build a votive shrine to beg for peace for the nation. Since then, with constant enthusiasm and hope, this consecration has been renewed every year in parishes, religious houses and in many families, who have confidence in the love and mercy of the Saviour who loves and continues to love all men and women, and welcomes them with the gentle words: "Come to me, all who labour and are heavy burdened, and I will give you rest" (Mt 11,28).

2. The Gospel reveals to us the unfathomable riches of the Heart of Christ in his attitude of pardon and mercy for all, in his burning love for the Father and for all humanity. At the same time, Jesus shows us the path to new life: "Learn from me for I am meek and humble of heart" (Mt 11,29). From this heart, a particularly expressive symbol of divine love, pierced by the soldier's spear (cf. Jn 19,33-34), flow abundant gifts for the life of the world: "I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (Jn 10,10). These are the gifts that Pope Pius XII mentioned in his Encyclical *Haurietis aquas*: his own life, the Holy Spirit, the Eucharist, the priesthood, the Church, his Mother, and his unceasing prayer for us (cf. nn. 36-44).

3. Now that the Catholic faithful of Colombia, presided over by their pastors and the authorities, prepare to renew this centenary consecration of their Nation to the Heart of Jesus, I want to repeat to them the appeal I made at the beginning of my mission as Successor of Peter: "Open wide the doors for Christ!" (*Homily*, 22 October 1978, n. 5; *ORE*, 2 November 1978, p. 12). Listen, dear Brothers, to the voice of Christ who continues to speak to the people of today. As I already wrote on another occasion: "In the Heart of Christ, man's heart learns to know the genuine and unique

meaning of his life and his destiny, to understand the value of an authentically Christian life, to keep himself from certain perversions of the human heart and to unite the filial love for God with the love of neighbour. The true reparation asked by the Heart of the Saviour will come when the civilization of love, the Kingdom of the Heart of Christ, can be built upon the ruins heaped up by hatred and violence" (*Letter to the Superior General of the Society of Jesus*, 5 October 1986; *ORE*, 27 October 1986, p. 7).

4. The consecration of the men and women of Colombia to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which you prepare to renew in the admirable tradition established now for 100 years, must be a special moment of grace and great dedication. Indeed, it must be a fervent prayer to the Lord to renew the whole of Colombian society, so that it can act with a new heart and a new spirit (cf. Ez 11,19).

Thus it will be possible to accept the call for prayer which I made in my Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio ineunte* (cf. nn. 32-33), when I asked that each Christian distinguish himself precisely in the art of prayer and contemplation of the face of the Lord (cf. *ibid.*, nn. 16-28), the One whom they pierced (cf. Jn 19,37); at the same time, it will foster an ongoing conversion which is the indispensable foundation for life as the new creation (cf. Col 3,10).

However, this personal conversion must also be accompanied by a profound social change which starts by strengthening the family, the richest school of humanism. Indeed, solid families are the core communities who foster and hand on human and Christian virtues, who nourish hope and real dedication among their members, who welcome and respect human life in all its stages, from conception to natural death.

A society that listens to and obeys Christ's message, moves on the way to true peace, rejects every kind of violence and conceives of new ways of harmonious living, takes the reliable and sound path of justice, reconciliation and forgiveness, and fosters bonds of unity, fraternity and respect for each person.

5. I strongly urge that this centenary, that is observed at a time when unfortunately your beloved nation does not yet enjoy stable peace and when violence continues to reap victims at every level of society, including even the pastors of the Church, this event will be an occasion for everyone - priests, religious and lay faithful - united with their bishops and coming from everywhere in this beloved land, to launch a great national movement of reconciliation and forgiveness. May it also be a moment to implore God for the gift of peace, and for each one in his own walk of life to commit himself to laying the foundations of the moral and material reconstruction of your national community. You know that in this work Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, will give you the necessary strength to re-establish a society based on justice, solidarity, responsibility and peace.

As I join you in spirit in the Consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, I beg him to pour out his abundant gifts upon the citizens, families, ecclesial communities, the public institutions and their

leaders, and, at the same time, entrusting these hopes to the motherly intercession of Our Lady of Chiquinquirá, Queen of Colombia, with great love I impart to you my Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 9 May 2002, the Solemnity of the Ascension.

JOHN PAUL II

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