



The Holy See

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

Friday, 12 December 2008

My Dear Brother Bishops,

To all of you, I extend greetings of peace and joy in the Lord Jesus. By his grace, you have come to this city to venerate the tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul as a sign of your communion with the Church in Rome, which “presides over the universal communion of charity” (*Pastores Gregis*, 57; cf. Saint Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Romanos*, 1:1). It is in this spirit of charity that I welcome you today and encourage the Catholic faithful in Taiwan to persevere in faith, hope and love.

“Comfort, give comfort to my people” (*Is* 40:1). These words, re-echoed in the Church’s liturgy this week, neatly summarize my message to you today. You are never alone! United to the Father through the Son and in the Holy Spirit, you, together with all your Brothers in the Episcopate, are graced with that “affective collegiality” that strengthens you to preach the Gospel and care for the needs of the Lord’s flock (cf. *Pastores Gregis*, 8). Indeed, your celebration of the 150th Anniversary of Catholic Evangelization in Taiwan is an occasion to manifest ever more eagerly your oneness with each other and with our Lord as you together promote the Church’s common apostolate.

This unity of mind and heart is evidenced by your desire to cooperate more closely in spreading the Gospel among non-believers and forming those already initiated into the Church through Baptism and Confirmation. I am pleased to note that you continue to coordinate a variety of institutions for this purpose, with due emphasis on the parish, the “prime mover and pre-eminent place for catechesis” (*Catechesi Tradendae*, 67). As Bishops, you are well aware of your vital role in this regard. Your office of teaching is inseparable from those of sanctifying and governing, and it is integral to what Saint Augustine calls the *amoris officium*: the “office of love” (Saint Augustine, *In*

Ioannem, 123). Crucial to this end is the formation of priests, who are ordained to assist you in exercising this “office of love” for the good of God’s people. These programmes are to be ongoing so that priests may continually refocus on the meaning of their mission and embrace it with fidelity and generosity. Such programmes must also be designed with due consideration for the variety of ages, life conditions and duties found among your clergy.

Priority must also be given to the thorough preparation of catechists. Once again, it is essential to take into consideration the array of settings in which they work and to furnish them with the necessary resources so that they may follow the example of Jesus in speaking the truth straightforwardly and in a way readily accessible to all (cf. *Mk* 4:11). With their active support, you will be able to draw up well-planned catechetical programmes that employ a progressive and gradual methodology, so that from year to year an ever-deepening encounter with the Triune God may be fostered among your people.

Effective catechesis inevitably builds stronger families, which in turn give birth to new priestly vocations. Indeed, the family is that “domestic Church” where the Gospel of Jesus is first heard and the art of Christian living first practised (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 11). The Church, at every level, must cherish and foster the gift of priesthood so that young men will generously respond to the Lord’s call to become labourers in the vineyard. Parents, pastors, teachers, parish leaders, and all the members of the Church must set before young people the radical decision to follow Christ, so that in finding him, they find themselves (cf. *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 25).

The family, as you know, is that “first and vital cell”: the prototype for every level of society (cf. *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 11). Your recent Pastoral Letter *Social Concern and Evangelization* underscores the Church’s need to engage actively in the promotion of family life. Founded on an irrevocable covenant, the family leads people to discover goodness, beauty and truth, so that they may perceive their unique destiny and learn how to contribute to the building up of a civilization of love. Your deep concern for the good of families and society as a whole, my Brothers, moves you to assist couples in preserving the indissolubility of their marital promises. Never tire in promoting just civil legislation and policies that protect the sacredness of marriage. Safeguard this sacrament from all that can harm it, especially the deliberate taking of life in its most vulnerable stages.

The Church’s solicitude for the weak similarly compels her to give special attention to migrants. In several recent pastoral letters, you have indicated the essential role of the parish in serving migrants and raising awareness of their needs. I am also pleased to note that the Church in Taiwan has been actively advocating laws and policies that protect the human rights of migrants. As you know, many of those who arrive on your shores not only share in the fullness of the Catholic communion, but also carry with them the unique cultural heritage of their respective places of origin. I encourage you to continue welcoming them with affection so that they may receive the assiduous pastoral care that will assure them of their belonging to the “family of the faith” (*Gal* 6:10).

My dear Brother Bishops, by the providence of Almighty God, you have been appointed to keep watch over that family of faith. Your apostolic bond with the Successor of Peter entails a pastoral responsibility for the universal Church across the globe. This particularly means, in your case, a loving concern for Catholics on the mainland, whom I constantly hold in prayer. You and the Christian faithful in Taiwan are a living sign that, in a justly ordered society, one need not fear to be a faithful Catholic and a good citizen. I pray that as part of the great Chinese Catholic family, you will continue to be spiritually united with your brethren on the mainland.

Dear Brothers, I am well aware that the obstacles you face can seem overwhelming. Yet there are many clear signs – Taiwan Youth Day and the Conference on Creative Evangelization are but two recent examples – of the Gospel’s power to convert, heal and save. May the words of the prophet Isaiah never fail to enliven your hearts: “Fear not! Here is your God!” (*Is* 40:9). The Lord indeed dwells among us! He continues to teach us by his word and feed us with his Body and Blood. The expectation of his return stirs us to voice the cry raised by Isaiah and echoed by John the Baptist: “Prepare the way of the Lord!” (cf. *Is* 40:3). I am confident that your faithful celebration of the Holy Sacrifice will prepare you and your people to meet the Lord when he comes again.

Entrusting you and the people under your care to the maternal protection of Mary, Help of Christians, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing.

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