



The Holy See

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

Hall of the Swiss, Papal Summer Residence, Castel Gandolfo
Friday, 26 September 2008

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate,

I am pleased to welcome you at this meeting at the end of your *ad limina* visit that enables me to greet you all together and to encourage you to hope - so necessary for the ministry that you are generously exercising in your respective particular Churches. I cordially thank Bishop Carlos María Collazzi Irazábal of Mercedes, President of the Bishops' Conference of Uruguay, for his words expressing your common sentiments of close communion with the See of Peter and the aspirations and anxieties that fill your hearts as Pastors who want to respond to the expectations of the People of God.

The visit to the tombs of St Peter and St Paul is a privileged opportunity to deepen knowledge of the origin and significance of the ministry of the Successors of the Apostles, to faithfully transmit the seed they planted (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 20), entirely dedicated to proclaiming Christ's Gospel and unanimous in their witness. It is also an important opportunity to reinforce the effective and affective bonds of the unity of the Episcopal College which must be an eminent expression of the ideal - so characteristic of the ecclesial community since its origins - of having "one heart and soul" (Acts 4: 32), and a visible example to foster the spirit of brotherhood and harmony in your faithful and in contemporary society, all too often dominated by individualism and exasperated rivalry.

This communion is also expressed in the task of making effective and putting into practice the pastoral guidelines you have proposed for the next five years, inspired by the evocative image of the meeting of the Risen Jesus with the disciples on the road to Emmaus. Indeed, the Teacher who accompanies and speaks to his followers and explains the Scriptures to them is a model to

follow to prepare the human mind and heart to succeed in discovering him and having a personal encounter with him. Thus, promoting the knowledge of and meditation on Sacred Scripture, explaining it faithfully in preaching and catechesis or teaching it at schools is indispensable in order to live out the Christian vocation responsibly in a firmer and more determined way. I encourage you in this undertaking with which you desire to make your faithful and your ecclesial communities share in the evangelizing and missionary impetus proposed by the Fifth General Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops' Conferences, celebrated in Aparecida.

The Word of God is also the indispensable source and content of your ministry as "preachers of the Gospel... who draw new disciples to Christ" (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 25), all the more necessary at a time when many other voices are seeking to silence God in personal and social life, leading people on paths that undermine authentic hope and take no interest in the sound truth on which the hearts of human beings can rest. Therefore, teach the faith of the Church in its integrity, with courage and the conviction of those who live by it and for it, never ceasing to proclaim the moral values of the Catholic Doctrine explicitly, which refer to the family, sexuality and life, that are sometimes the subject of debate in the political and cultural context and in the means of social communication. I know of your efforts to defend human life from its conception to its natural end. I ask God to grant that every Uruguayan may bear the fruits of a clear awareness of the inviolable dignity of all people and a firm commitment to respecting and safeguarding it without reserve.

In this task you rely on the invaluable collaboration of priests whom it is necessary to encourage constantly so that without conforming to the prevalent trends of the world (cf. Rm 12: 2) they may be true disciples and missionaries of Christ, who zealously take his message of salvation to parishes and communities, to families and to all those who, above all, long to learn words from the Spirit rather than from purely human knowledge (cf. 1 Cor 2: 6). The Pastor's constant concern for candidates to the priesthood can be crucial for a formation in which emphasis is placed on the principal feature that must distinguish a minister of the Church: love for Christ, serious theological competence in full harmony with the Magisterium and the Tradition of the Church, constant personal meditation on Christ's saving mission and an irreproachable life, in conformity with the service he renders to the People of God. In this way they will witness faithfully to what they preach and will help their brethren to avoid a superficial religiosity with little effect on the ethical commitments that faith entails in order to learn from Christ to live "in true righteousness and holiness" (Eph 4: 24).

In this regard, a great deal is also expected of consecrated people or of the members of the various movements and associations, especially dedicated to the Church's mission. They are called to witness joyfully that a person achieves fullness of life when he prefers *to be better* rather than merely *to have more*, and makes the true values shine forth, together with the incomparable joy of having encountered Christ and dedicated oneself unconditionally to him.

Dear brothers, may you know that the task of the true witness of Christ is far from easy. It

demands a great deal but it is clear and above all relies on the power of the One who has "overcome the world" (cf. Jn 16: 33). Without letting yourselves be disheartened in the many situations of religious indifference or apathy, continue to be messengers of the "hope [that] does not disappoint" (Rm 5: 5) and sharers of Christ's love for the poor and needy by means of the charitable institutions of the ecclesial communities. In difficult situations, which also affect Uruguayans, the Church is called to show great-heartedness, solidarity and the ability of the family as children of God to make sacrifices for their brothers and sisters in difficulty.

At the close of this meeting, I ask you to convey my cordial greeting to your priests and seminarians, to the monasteries and religious communities, movements and associations, catechists and all the other people who are dedicated to the fascinating task of bringing Christ's light to the People of God and keeping it alive. I invoke the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary on your apostolic duties and likewise on all the beloved Uruguayans, and I wholeheartedly impart to you the Apostolic Blessing.

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