



The Holy See

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

Consistory Hall

Thursday, 2 April 2009

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate,

It gives me great joy to be able to receive you this morning, Pastors of the People of God in Argentina, who have come to Rome for your visit *ad limina Apostolorum*. My thoughts also turn to all the dioceses you represent and to your priests, religious and faithful who work with self-denial and enthusiasm for the edification of the Kingdom of God in this beloved nation.

First of all I would like to thank you for the kind words which Archbishop Alfonso Delgado Evers of San Juan de Cuyo has addressed to me on behalf of you all. He has wished to repeat to me your sentiments of communion with the Successor of Peter, thereby reinforcing the inner bond that unites us in faith, fraternal love and prayer.

As in many other parts of the world, in Argentina too you feel the urgent need to carry out an extensive and effective evangelizing action which, taking into account the Christian values that have shaped your country's history and culture, will lead to the spiritual and moral renewal of your communities and of the whole of society. You are also motivated to do this by the vigorous missionary impetus that the Fifth General Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops' Conferences, held in Aparecida, desired to inspire throughout the Church in Latin America (cf. Final Document, n. 213).

My venerable Predecessor, Pope Paul VI, said in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* that "to evangelize is first of all to bear witness, in a simple and direct way, to God revealed by Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit, to bear witness that in his Son God has loved the world" (n. 26). Therefore, it does not consist solely in passing on or teaching a doctrine but also in proclaiming

Christ, the mystery of his Person and his love, because we are truly convinced that "there is nothing more beautiful than to be surprised by the Gospel, by the encounter with Christ. There is nothing more beautiful than to know him and to speak to others of our friendship with him" (*Homily, Mass for the inauguration of the Petrine Ministry*, 24 April 2005).

This clear and explicit proclamation of Christ as the Saviour of men and women fits into the enthusiastic search for truth, beauty and goodness that characterizes the human being. Furthermore, taking into account that "the truth cannot impose itself except by virtue of its own truth" (*Dignitatis Humanae*, n. 1), and that the knowledge acquired from others or transmitted by one's own culture enriches the human being with truths that he could not acquire on his own, we consider that "proclamation of and witness to the Gospel are the first service that Christians can render to every person and to the entire human race" (*Address to the Congress of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples*, 11 March 2006).

Every evangelizing mission is born from a threefold love: for the word of God, for the Church and for the world. Since through Sacred Scripture Christ enables us to know him in his Person, in his life and in his teaching, "the Church's principal task, at the start of this new millennium, is above all to nourish herself on the word of God, in order to make new evangelization, the proclamation in our day, more effective" (*Homily at the conclusion of the 12th General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops*, 26 October 2008). Mindful that the word of God always yields abundant fruits (cf. Is 55: 10-11; Mt 13: 23) and that his word alone can profoundly change the human heart, I encourage you, dear Brothers to facilitate access to Sacred Scripture for all the faithful (cf. *Dei Verbum*, 22, 25), so that by placing the word of God at the centre of their lives, they may welcome Christ as our Redeemer and his light may illumine every context of humanity (cf. *Homily at the Opening of the 12th General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops*, 5 October 2008).

Given that the word of God cannot be understood if it is separated from the Church or marginalized, it is necessary to encourage the spirit of communion and fidelity to the Magisterium, especially in those whose mission it is to communicate the Gospel message in its integrity. Moreover, the evangelizer must be a faithful son or daughter of the Church and, in addition, must be full of love for men and women in order to offer them the great hope that is in us (cf. 1 Pt 3: 15).

One must always bear in mind that the first form of evangelization is the witness of one's own life (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 35). Holiness of life is a precious gift that you can offer to your communities on the path of the true renewal of the Church. Today, more than ever, holiness is an ever-present necessity since the person of our time feels a pressing need for the clear and attractive testimony of a consistent and exemplary life.

In this respect, I strongly urge you to pay special attention to the priests, your most direct collaborators. More than ever, the challenges of our time demand virtuous priests, full of a spirit of prayer and sacrifice, with a sound formation and dedicated to the service of Christ and of the

Church through the exercise of charity. The priest has the great responsibility of appearing to the faithful as irreproachable in his conduct, closely following Christ and with the support and encouragement of the faithful, especially with their prayers, understanding and spiritual affection.

The proclamation of the Gospel concerns everyone in the Church including the lay faithful, destined for this mission through their Baptism and Confirmation (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 33). I urge you, beloved Brothers in the Episcopate, to see that lay people are increasingly aware of their vocation as living members of the Church and authentic disciples and missionaries of Christ in all things (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 43). How many benefits one may expect, even for civil society, from the revival of a mature laity that seeks holiness in its temporal activities, in full communion with its Pastors, standing firm in its apostolic vocation to be a Gospel leaven in the world!

As I commend all your pastoral desires, concerns, and persons, with special devotion to the Virgin Mary, *Nuestra Señora de Luján*, I impart with all my affection in the Lord to you, to your priests, to your religious, seminarians and faithful a special Apostolic Blessing.

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