



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE BISHOPS OF THE SOUTH III AND SOUTH IV REGIONS
OF THE BRAZILIAN BISHOP'S CONFERENCE
ON THEIR "AD LIMINA" VISIT**

Saturday, 5 December 2009

Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate,

I welcome and greet each and every one of you, as I receive you collegially in the context of your *ad limina* visit. I thank Archbishop Murilo Krieger for the words of devoted esteem he has addressed to me on behalf of all of you and of the people entrusted to your pastoral care in the South III and South IV Regions, also having explained their challenges and their hopes. In hearing all this, I feel in my heart a surge of gratitude to the Lord for the gift of faith mercifully granted to your ecclesial communities and zealously preserved and painstakingly transmitted by them, in obedience to the mandate that Jesus left us to bring his Good News to every creature seeking to permeate today's culture with Christian humanism.

With regard to culture, one's thoughts turn to two classical contexts where it is formed and communicated: university and school, focusing mainly on the academic communities that come into being in the shadow of Christian humanism and are inspired by it, doing honour to the name "Catholic". Now, "the fact that in their own individual ways all members of the school community share this Christian vision, makes the school 'Catholic'; principles of the Gospel in this manner become the educational norms since the school then has them as its internal motivation and final goal" (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, *The Catholic School*, n. 34).

May the Catholic School, in a convinced synergy with families and with the ecclesial community, promote that unity between faith, culture and life that constitutes the fundamental objective of Christian education.

Catholic schools too, in various forms and ways, may be helped in their educational task by the presence of teachers who are believers in the first place, but not exclusively, Catholic teachers of religion and by students who have had a Christian formation, as well as by the collaboration of families and of the Christian community itself. In fact, a healthy secularism at school implies the denial of transcendence nor mere neutrality in the face of those prerequisites and moral values, including religious education, that are found at the root of an authentic formation of the person.

The Catholic school cannot be considered as existing separate or apart from other educational institutions. It is at the service of society: it carries out a public role and a service of public usefulness that is not reserved exclusively to Catholics but open to all who wish to avail themselves of a good education. The problem of its juridical and financial parity with the State school may be correctly understood only if we start by recognizing the primary role of families and the subsidiary role of the other educational institutions. Art. 26, 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights says: "Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children". The centuries-old commitment of the Catholic school is set in this direction, impelled by an even more radical force, that is, by the power that makes Christ the centre of the educational process.

This process, which begins at primary and at secondary school, is achieved at a higher and more specialized level at university. The Church has always shown solidarity to the university and to its vocation to lead the human being to the loftiest levels of knowledge of the truth and of dominion over the world in all its aspects. I am pleased to express here my deep ecclesial gratitude to the various religious congregations among you which have founded and supported prestigious universities, reminding them nevertheless that the latter do not belong to those who founded them nor to those who attend them. Rather, they are an expression of the Church and of her patrimony of faith.

In this regard, beloved Brothers, it is worth remembering that last August the Instruction *Libertatis Nuntius* on Certain Aspects of the "Theology of Liberation" published by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith celebrated its 25th anniversary. It stressed the danger that is entailed in an a-critical acceptance on the part of certain theologians of theses and methodologies that derive from Marxism. Its more or less visible consequences consisting of rebellion, division, dissent, offence, and anarchy make themselves felt, creating in your diocesan communities great suffering and a serious loss of vitality. I implore all those who in some way have felt attracted, involved and deeply touched by certain deceptive principles of Liberation Theology to consider once again the above-mentioned Instruction, perceiving the kind light with which it is proffered. I remind everyone that ""the supreme rule of her [the Church's] faith' derives from the unity which the Spirit has created between Sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture and the Magisterium of the Church in a reciprocity which means that none of the three can survive without the others" (John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, n. 55); and that in the context of Church bodies and communities, forgiveness offered and received in the name of and out of love for the Most Blessed Trinity, whom we worship in our hearts, puts

an end to the suffering of our beloved Church, a pilgrim in the Lands of the Holy Cross.

Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate, in union with Christ the Virgin Mary, so deeply loved and venerated in your dioceses and the whole of Brazil, precedes us and guides us. In her we find pure and undefiled the true essence of the Church and thus, through her, we learn to know and love the mystery of the Church which lives in history. We feel profoundly part of her, we become in our turn "ecclesial souls" learning to resist that "inner secularization" which is threatening the Church and her teaching.

As I ask the Lord to pour out an abundance of his light upon the whole world of education in Brazil, I entrust its leaders to the protection of the Virgin Most Holy and impart to you, to your priests, to the men and women religious, to the committed lay people and to all the faithful of your dioceses, a fatherly Apostolic Blessing.

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