



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO MEXICO AND THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA

(MARCH 23-29, 2012)

VISIT TO THE SHRINE OF THE "VIRGEN DE LA CARIDAD DEL COBRE"

WORDS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

El Cobre, Steps of the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Charity

Tuesday, 27 March 2012

[Video]

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I have come as a pilgrim to the house of the blessed statue of Our Lady of Charity, *la Mambisa* as you call upon her with affection. Her presence in this town of El Cobre is a gift from heaven for all Cubans.

I am pleased to offer cordial greetings to everyone here present. Receive the affection of the Pope and carry it with you from this place, so that everyone can experience consolation and strength in faith. Let all those you meet know, whether near or far, that I have entrusted to the Mother of God the future of your country, advancing along the ways renewal and hope, for the greater good of all Cubans. I have also prayed to the Virgin for the needs of those who suffer, of those who are deprived of freedom, those who are separated from their loved ones or who are undergoing times of difficulty. I have placed in her Immaculate Heart young people, that they may be authentic friends of Christ and that they may not succumb to things which bring sadness in their wake. Before Mary of Charity, I remember in a particular way Cubans who are the descendents of those who arrived here from Africa, like the nearby people of Haiti, where the consequences of the earthquake of two years ago are still being suffered. And I cannot forget the many country people and their families who wish to live the Gospel deeply in their homes and who offer their homes as

mission centres for the celebration of Mass.

Following the example of the Most Holy Virgin, I encourage all the sons and daughters of this dear country to continue to build their lives on the firm rock which is Jesus Christ, to work for justice, to be servants of charity and to persevere in the midst of trials. May nothing or no one take from you your inner joy which is so characteristic of the Cuban soul. May God bless you. Thank you very much.