



The Holy See

MEETING ORGANIZED BY THE CHURCH IN COLOMBIA
FOR THE CENTENARY OF THE ENCYCLICAL LETTER
LACRIMABILI STATU INDORUM
[BOGOTÀ, 18-20 SEPTEMBER 2012]

MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE BENEDICT XVI

*To my Venerable Brother
Archbishop Rubén Salazar Gómez
of Bogota and President of the Bishops' Conference of Colombia*

I was delighted to know that the celebration of the Encyclical Letter *Lacrimabili Statu Indorum* is planned to take place this year in Colombia. It was signed on 7 June 1912 by my Predecessor, St Pius X, and on this happy occasion I have the pleasure of sending to you and to all the particular Churches of this beloved nation my cordial greeting in the Lord.

In continuity with the Encyclical Letter *Immensa Pastorum* by Benedict XIV, the above-mentioned document emphasized the need to work harder for the evangelization of the indigenous peoples and the constant advancement of their dignity and progress.

The commemoration of that Magisterium is an extraordinary opportunity offered to us to continue to deepen the pastoral care of these indigenous peoples and not to stop interpreting every human situation in order to imbue it with the power of the Gospel (cf. Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, n. 20). Indeed, the Church does not consider any legitimate human aspiration irrelevant, and makes her own the most noble goals of these peoples that are all too often marginalized or misunderstood and whose dignity is no less than that of any other person, since every man and every woman has been created in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gen 1:26-27).

Moreover, Jesus Christ, who always showed his special concern for the poor and the abandoned,

tells us that all that we do or stop doing, as we “to one of the least of these my brethren” (Mt 25:40). we did it to him. No one, therefore, who boasts of the name “Christian” can fail to show concern for his neighbour or belittle him for reasons of language, race or culture. In this regard, the Apostle Paul himself sheds the proper light on it for us, when he says: “by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body — Jews or Greeks, slaves or free” (1 Cor 12:13).

With strong sentiments of closeness to those peoples, I willingly join all those who, encouraged by the Messages of my Predecessors on the Chair of St Peter, are carrying ahead praiseworthy work on their behalf, as they joyfully see the grace that they share with them every day and courageously engage to continue to guide them, in order to build a luminous and promising future for everyone.

In this let us follow the apostolic daring and example of such outstanding bishops as Toribio de Mogrovejo or Ezequiel Moreno, the faultless charity of religious such as Roque González de Santa Cruz or Laura Montoya and the simplicity and humility of such exemplary lay people as Ceferino Namuncurá or Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin. Nor can we forget the numerous congregations and institutes of religious life that were born on the American continent to face the challenges of that mission. And how could we fail to remember in this same context the outstanding witness and significant apostolic work undertaken by so many men and women who, with a great spirit of communion and ecclesial collaboration, energetically devoted themselves to taking the name of Jesus Christ to those peoples, employing their talents to help them to discover in the Gospel the life in fullness to which they had always aspired.

I would like to urge everyone to consider this event as a favourable moment for giving a new impulse to the proclamation of the Gospel among these beloved brethren of ours, fostering their spirit of mutual understanding, of service in solidarity and of reciprocal respect. In opening themselves to Christ they do not suffer any damage to their innate virtues and qualities; on the contrary, the redeeming action invigorates and strengthens them. May they find in his divine Heart a living source of hope, the strength and tenacity to confront the challenges they must face, consolation amidst their difficulties and the inspiration to identify ways to surmount and edify on the way they are called to take. In proclaiming the saving message to them, the Church is complying with the mandate of her Founder, and on whom she is founded in order to promote the genuine aspirations of these peoples, often at a disadvantage due to the frequent lack of respect for their customs, as well as by situations of forced migration, unjust violence or serious obstacles in their defence of their natural Reserves.

With deep love to all and in harmony with the Church’s social teaching, I invite you to listen without prejudice to the voice of these brothers and sisters of ours, to promote real knowledge of their history and of their way of life, as well as to encourage their participation in all the milieus of society and of the Church. The present celebration is providential in order that, with upright intentions and configured to Jesus Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life for the entire human

race, the wish to safeguard the dignity and rights of the indigenous peoples grow among pastors and faithful alike, and that they, in turn, be more ready to carry out their duties, in harmony with their ancestral traditions.

I implore the Almighty first of all to protect the sacred character of their life. May their existence not be restricted for any reason, for God does not want anyone's death and commands us to love each other as brothers and sisters. May their lands be properly protected. May no one, for any reason, exploit or manipulate these peoples and may these peoples never let themselves be lured by ideologies into their dangerous grip.

As a pledge of abundant heavenly gifts, invoking the powerful intercession of Mary Most Holy, Mother of the Creator and Our Mother, upon those who are taking part in the various initiatives to commemorate the centenary of the Encyclical *Lacrimabili Statu Indorum* to all I impart a special Apostolic Blessing to help the indigenous peoples to feel increasingly at home in the Church, to develop in everything that will morally and religiously uplift them, and to enable them to be a hearth of communion, so as to live their condition as children of God authentically and in union with Christ.

From the Vatican, 15 June 2012

BENEDICTUS PP XVI