



The Holy See

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

Consistory Hall

Thursday, 4 December 2008

Your Eminence,

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate,

I offer you my most cordial welcome at this meeting that concludes your *ad limina* visit and has enabled me, as Successor of Peter, to share in the apostolic work before you in the beloved land of Chile.

I would like first of all to warmly thank Bishop Alejandro Goic Karmelic of Rancagua, President of your Bishops' Conference, for his kind words to me on behalf of all. I also express my affection and recognition to your respective dioceses and to each and every one of the children of the Church in Chile.

The Lord Jesus, having spent the night in prayer, "called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also named Apostles" (Lk 6: 13). He has likewise chosen you, dear brothers, successors of the Apostles, and, making you partakers in his love, he has entrusted to you the task of extending his message of salvation throughout the world (cf. Jn 15: 15).

I therefore invite you to cultivate an intense and profound inner life of faith because it is in close contact with the Lord in prayer that one develops the best pastoral initiatives to respond to the spiritual needs of the faithful, and thus, starting from God, we shall be able to reach out to our brethren with an effective word of hope. There are of course numerous difficulties and obstacles, but relying on the promise of our Lord who assures us of his presence in our midst every day until the end of the world (cf. Mt 28: 20) and on the power of the Holy Spirit, we shall be able to dedicate ourselves with hopefulness and enthusiasm to the important task of taking Christ to all people with the same enthusiasm as the Apostles.

As the result of an immense effort of ecclesial discernment and in harmony with the Final Document of the Fifth General Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops' Conferences in Aparecida, you have drafted some appropriate *Pastoral Guidelines* for the next four years. With these you intend to inspire in all the faithful the joy of following Christ, as well as a greater missionary awareness that will permit the whole ecclesial community of Chile to confront the challenges of the present time with a real apostolic impetus.

This great evangelical undertaking, to which you have decidedly dedicated yourselves, demands of you a special effort of purification and charity. You well know that contemporary man feels a pressing need for real life examples that are truly evangelical and coherent. For this reason, the holiness of all the members of the Church, especially her Pastors, is one of the most precious gifts you can offer to your brethren. While recalling the many Saints and Blesseds of your land who, with their marvellous witness of faith and devotion at the service of their brothers and sisters (cf. *Orientaciones Pastorales*, n. 3), are not only a patrimony of the Catholic Church but of the entire Chilean society, may you persevere in tirelessly advancing the universal call to holiness (cf. *Lumen gentium*, nn. 39-42).

I likewise wish to commend to you in a special way the priests, your closest collaborators, and I ask you to kindly convey to them my recognition of their fidelity to the ministry they have received and of their constant and generous work. Show yourselves to be very close to them in their difficulties and help them so that among the many activities that fill their day, they may be able to give priority to prayer and to the celebration of the Eucharist, which conforms them to Jesus Christ, the Eternal High Priest.

In this regard I encourage you not to slacken your efforts to improve the quality of the human, intellectual and spiritual formation of seminarians. In addition, it is necessary to strengthen the vocational dimension of Christian life in the pastoral ministry with youth, through adequate spiritual guidance that enables them to respond generously to the call of Jesus in their lives.

I also know of the great efforts you have made towards lay people assuming with responsibility and maturity the requirements of their Baptism, taking part, as befits their lay condition, in the mission of the whole Church. Continue to offer them an adequate education in the faith, as well as a more assiduous contact with the Word of God that brings them to a greater missionary commitment in their lives. They have received as a specific vocation the sanctification of the world, transforming it from within according to God's plan (cf. *ibid.*, n. 31). All social milieus can be illuminated by the light of the faith. I am referring, among other things, to the world of culture, of science and politics, of the promotion of the family founded on matrimony between a man and a woman, to the creation of fairer working conditions and assistance to the most deprived, to care for the environment, to the defence of human life in all its stages and to the right and obligation of parents to provide for the moral and spiritual education of their children.

Another important aspect of your ministry that I would like to recommend strongly to you is your dioceses' charitable activity in aid of the poor. In fact, after the example of the first community of disciples (cf. Acts 2: 42-44), we must endeavour to ensure that the Church, as God's family, is a place of mutual help (cf. *Deus caritas est*, n. 32).

Lastly, I encourage you to continue to foster the spirit of communion with the Roman Pontiff and with your other brother Bishops, especially those in your own Bishops' Conference and your own Province. Dear Brothers, you have been "configured to Christ in order to love the Church with the love of Christ the Bridegroom" (Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores gregis*, n. 13) and to watch over and protect her unity. Therefore, may you be true models and instruments of communion for all.

As I take my leave of you I ask you to take back the Pope's greeting to the Bishops emeritus, to the priests, to the men and women religious, to the seminarians and to all the faithful and to assure them of his prayers for them. I entrust you all to the motherly hands of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, so that she may guide you and help you to succeed in your apostolic undertakings and I impart to you the Apostolic Blessing, which I extend to each and every one of your dear diocesan faithful.

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