



# The Holy See

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EUCARISTIC CELEBRATION  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE BICENTENARY OF INDEPENDENCE  
OF COUNTRIES IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

*HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI*

*Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Guadalupe, Vatican Basilica*  
*Monday, 12 December 2011*

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*Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

“The earth has yielded its increase” (Ps 67 [66]:6). The Fathers of the Church recognized in this image, taken from the Psalm we just heard and which invites all the peoples and nations to praise the Lord with joy, the Virgin Mary and of Christ, her Son: “The earth is Mary Most Holy, who comes from our earth, our lineage, from this clay, from this mud, from Adam. The earth has yielded its fruit: it first produced a flower ... this flower then became a fruit so that we might eat it so that we might eat its flesh. Would you like to know what this fruit is? It is the Virgin Son who proceeds from the Virgin Mother; the Lord from the handmaid; God from man; the Son from the Mother; the fruit from the earth” (St Jerome, *Breviarum in Psalm.* 66: PL, 1010-1011). Today, exulting over the fruit of this earth, we too are saying: “Let the peoples praise thee, O God” (Ps 67 [66]:4). We proclaim the gift of redemption gained by Christ and, in Christ, we acknowledge his power and divine majesty.

Moved by these sentiments, I greet fraternally the Cardinals and Bishops who are with us, the various diplomatic representatives, the priests and men and women religious, as well as the faithful gathered here in St Peter’s Basilica to celebrate with joy the Solemnity of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother and Star of the Evangelization of America. I also remember all those who have

joined us in spirit and are praying to God with us for the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, many of whom are celebrating the bicentenary of their Independence at this time and, going beyond the historical, social and political aspects of these events, are expressing anew to the Most High their gratitude for the great gift of faith they received, a faith that proclaims the redemptive mystery of the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, so that all the peoples of the earth may have life in Him. The Successor of Peter could not let this occasion pass without expressing the Church's joy in the many gifts which God, in his infinite kindness, has in these years poured out upon these beloved nations, who so affectionately invoke Mary Most Holy.

The venerated image of the Black Madonna of Tepeyac, with her sweet and peaceful countenance, imprinted on the *tilma* of the *indio* St Juan Diego, shows her as “the ever Virgin Mary, Mother of the True God from whom she lives” (*From the Office of Readings. Nicán Mopohua*, 12th ed., Mexico City, D.F., 1971, 3-19). She reminds us of the “woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; she was with child” (Rev 12:1-2). She signals the presence of the Saviour to the indigenous and *mestizo* population. She always leads us to her divine Son, who is revealed as the foundation of the dignity of every human being, as a love that is stronger than the powers of evil and death, and the fountain of joy, filial trust, consolation and hope.

The Magnificat that we proclaimed in the Gospel “is the song both of the Mother of God and of the Church; the song of the Daughter of Zion and of the new People of God; the song of thanksgiving for the fullness of graces poured out in the economy of salvation and the song of the ‘poor’ whose hope is met by the fulfillment of the promises made to our ancestors” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 2619). In an act of gratitude to her Lord and of the humility of his handmaid the Virgin Mary praises God for all that he is doing on behalf of his people Israel. God is the One who deserves all honour and glory, the Mighty One who does marvels for his faithful servant and today continues to show his love to all men and women, especially those who are facing difficult trials.

“Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on an ass” (Zech 9:9), we heard in the First Reading. Since the Incarnation of the Word, the divine Mystery is revealed in Jesus Christ, who is the contemporary of every human person in every time and place through the Church, whose Mother and model is Mary. Therefore, today we can continue praising God for the wonders he has worked in the life of the people of Latin America and the whole world, revealing his presence in the Son and the outpouring of his Spirit as the newness of personal and community life. God has hidden these things from the “wise and learned”, letting them be known to the humble and simple of heart (cf. Mt 11:25).

By her “yes” to God’s call, the Virgin Mary manifested divine love among men. In this sense she, with her simplicity and maternal heart, continues to indicate the one Light and the one Truth: her Son, Jesus Christ, who is “the definitive answer to the question of the meaning of life, and to those fundamental questions which still trouble so many men and women on the American continent”

(Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America*, n. 10). Similarly, “by her manifold intercession (she) continues to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation. By her maternal charity, she cares for the brethren of her Son, who still journey on earth surrounded by dangers and difficulties, until they are led into their blessed home” (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 62).

At this time, as various parts of Latin America are commemorating the bicentenary of their Independence, the process of integration in this beloved continent is progressing, while at the same time it is playing a new role on the world scene. In these circumstances it is important that its diverse people can safeguard the rich treasure of faith and their historical-cultural dynamism, always being the defenders of human life from conception to natural end and promoters of peace; they must likewise care for the family in this genuine nature and mission, at the same time intensifying a vast grass-roots educational campaign that correctly prepares individuals and makes them aware of their capacities in such a way that they can face their destiny with responsibility and dignity. They are likewise called to foster ever more proven initiatives and effective programmes that promote reconciliation and fraternity, increase solidarity and care for the environment, at the same time intensifying efforts to overcome poverty, illiteracy and corruption, and to eradicate every form of injustice, violence, criminality, civic unrest, drug trafficking and extortion.

When the Church was preparing to recall the fifth centenary of the planting of the Cross of Christ in the good soil of the American Continent, on that same soil Bl. John Paul II formulated for the first time a programme for a new evangelization, new “in its ardour, in its methods, in its expression” (cf. *Address to the CELAM Assembly*, 9 March 1983, III: AAS 75, 1983, 778). Because of my responsibility of confirming in the faith, I also want to encourage the apostolic zeal that is now motivating and driving the “continental mission” promoted in Aparecida, so that “Christian faith may become more deeply rooted in the heart of Latin American individuals and peoples as founding event and living encounter with Christ” (Fifth General Conference of the Council of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean, Final Document, n. 13). Thus there will be a multiplication of genuine disciples and missionaries of the Lord and a renewal of Latin America and the Caribbean’s vocation to hope. May the light of God shine more and more on the face of each of the sons and daughters of this beloved land and may his redemptive grace guide their decisions so that they may continue progressing untiringly in the building of a society founded upon the development of the good, the triumph of love and the spread of justice. With these fervent desires and sustained by the help of Divine Providence, I intend to undertake an Apostolic Journey to Mexico and Cuba before Easter, to proclaim there the Word of Christ and support the conviction that this is a precious time to evangelize with a true faith, a living hope and an ardent charity.

I commend to the loving mediation of Our Lady of Guadalupe, our heavenly Mother all these intentions and the present situation of the Latin American and Caribbean nations and their progress towards a better future. I likewise invoke upon them the intercession of the many saints and blesseds that the Spirit has raised up throughout the length and breadth of the history of this

continent, offering heroic models of Christian virtue in diverse states of life and social milieu, that their example may promote more and more a new evangelization under the gaze of Christ, Saviour of man and strength of our soul. Amen.

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