



# The Holy See

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APOSTOLIC JOURNEY  
OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI  
TO VALENCIA (SPAIN) ON OCCASION  
OF THE FIFTH WORLD MEETING OF FAMILIES

***LETTER OF THE HOLY FATHER  
TO THE SPANISH BISHOPS***

*Dear Brothers in the Episcopate,*

With heartfelt joy I give thanks to the Lord that I have been able to come to Spain as Pope, in order to take part in the World Meeting of Families in Valencia. I greet you with affection, my Brother Bishops of this beloved country, and I thank you for your presence here and for the hard work put into the preparation and celebration of this Visit. I am especially appreciative of the efforts of the Archbishop of Valencia and his Auxiliary Bishops to make this event, so significant for the entire Church, bear its desired fruit and give new impulse to the family as a sanctuary of love, life and faith.

Indeed, your solicitude has already made it possible to create a family-like setting among the organizers and participants from throughout Spain. This is a very promising sign in light of the desires which you expressed in your joint message on this World Meeting, and at the same time an incentive to build on its results in pursuing an ongoing and decisive pastoral outreach to families in your Dioceses, making it possible for every home to receive the Gospel message, which confirms and enriches love and thus helps it to overcome whatever difficulties it may encounter.

You know that I follow closely and with much interest the life of the Church in your country, a country with deep Christian roots, one which has greatly contributed and must still contribute to the

proclamation and spread of the faith to many other parts of the world. Keep alive and vigorous this spirit, which has accompanied the life of Spaniards throughout their history, so that it will help nourish and vitalize the soul of your people.

I am aware of, and I encourage the impulse that you are giving to pastoral activity at a time of rapid secularization, which can also affect the internal life of Christian communities. Continue dauntlessly to proclaim that prescind from God, acting as if he did not exist or relegating faith to the purely private sphere, undermines the truth about man and compromises the future of culture and society. On the contrary, lifting one's gaze to the living God, the guarantor of our freedom and of truth, is a premise for arriving at a new humanity. Nowadays, in a special way the world needs people capable of proclaiming and bearing witness to God who is love, and consequently the one light which in the end, illumines the darkness of the world and gives us strength to live and work (cf. *Deus Caritas Est*, 39).

In times and situations of difficulty, recall those words of the *Letter to the Hebrews*: "let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, disregarding the shame ... so that you may not grow weary or lose heart" (12:1-3). Proclaim that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the living God" (*Mt* 16:16), "the one who has the words of eternal life" (cf. *Jn* 6:68), and you will not tire of giving reason for your hope (cf. *1 Pet* 3:15).

Prompted by your pastoral solicitude and the spirit of full communion in the proclamation of the Gospel, you have guided the Christian conscience of the faithful about different aspects of the situation confronting them, which occasionally disturb ecclesial life and the faith of the simple. You have also made the Eucharist a central theme of your *Pastoral Plan*, with the aim of "revitalizing the Christian life from its very heart, since when we enter into the Eucharistic mystery we encounter the heart of God" (No. 5). Certainly in the Eucharist there takes place "the central act of transformation capable of truly renewing the world" (*Homily in Marienfeld*, Cologne, 21 August 2005).

Brothers in the Episcopate, I exhort you earnestly to preserve and increase your fraternal communion, as a witness and model of the ecclesial communion which should reign in all the faithful people entrusted to your care. I pray for you, and I pray for Spain. I ask you to pray for me and for the whole Church. I invoke the Most Holy Virgin Mary, so greatly venerated in your land, asking that she protect and accompany you in your pastoral ministry, and to all of you I impart with great affection my Apostolic Blessing.

*Valencia, 8 July 2006*

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