



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE BISHOPS OF THE NORTH II REGION
OF THE EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE OF BRAZIL
ON THEIR "AD LIMINA" VISIT**

Thursday, 15 April 2010

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate,

Your *ad limina* visit is taking place in an atmosphere of paschal praise and jubilation which envelops the entire Church, shining the dazzling light of the Risen Christ. In him, humanity has triumphed over death and has completed the last stage of its growth, entering the heavenly places (cf. Eph 2: 6). Jesus can now freely retrace his steps and meet his brethren as, when and where he wishes. In his name I am pleased to welcome you, devout Pastors of the pilgrim Church of God in the North II Region of Brazil, with the greeting with which the Lord presented himself risen to the Apostles and their companions: "Peace to you" (Lk 24: 36).

Your presence here is agreeably familiar since it seems to recall the finale of the history of the disciples at Emmaus (cf. Lk 24: 33-35): you have come to recount what has happened on the journey with Jesus made by your dioceses, scattered throughout the immense Amazon region, together with their parishes and the other entities of which they consist, such as the movements, the new communities and the basic ecclesial communities in communion with their Bishop (cf. *Aparecida Document*, n. 179). Nothing could give me greater joy than knowing that you are in Christ and with Christ, as the diocesan reports you have sent testify, and for which I thank you. I am particularly grateful to Bishop Jesús María, for the words he has just addressed to me on your behalf and on behalf of the People of God entrusted to you, emphasizing its faithfulness and adherence to Peter. On your return, please assure the People of God of my gratitude for these sentiments and of my blessing, adding: "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" (Lk 24: 34).

In that appearance, the words if there were any grow hazy in the amazement at seeing the

Teacher risen, whose presence says everything: I was dead but now I am alive and you will live through me (cf. Rv 1: 18). And being alive and risen, Christ can become "the living bread" (Jn 6: 51) for humanity. This is why I feel that the centre and permanent source of the Petrine ministry are in the Eucharist, the heart of Christian life, the source and summit of the Church's evangelizing mission. Thus you can understand the Successor of Peter's anxiety about anything that could cloud the most original point of the Catholic faith: today Jesus Christ continues to be alive and really present in the consecrated host and cup.

That less attention is sometimes paid to the devotion to the Blessed Sacrament indicates and causes an obscuration of the Christian meaning of the mystery, as happens when in Holy Mass it is no longer Jesus who appears pre-eminent and active but, rather, a community preoccupied with too many things instead of recollecting and letting itself be drawn towards the only One necessary: its Lord. Now, the main, fundamental attitude of the Christian faithful who take part in the liturgical celebration is not action but listening, opening themselves, receiving.... It is clear that in this case receiving does not mean remaining passive or uninterested in what is going on there but cooperating since by God's grace they are once again enabled to do so in accordance with "the real nature of the true Church. The Church is essentially both human and divine, visible but endowed with invisible realities, zealous in action and dedicated to contemplation, present in the world, but as a pilgrim, so constituted that in her the human is directed toward and subordinated to the divine, the visible to the invisible, action to contemplation, and this present world to that city yet to come, the object of our quest" (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 2). If, in the Liturgy the figure of Christ who is its principle and is really present to make it effective were not to emerge we should no longer have the Christian liturgy, completely dependent upon the Lord and sustained by his creative presence.

How distant from all this are those who, in the name of inculturation, run into syncretism, introducing into the celebration of Holy Mass rites culled from other religions or cultural particularities (cf. *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, n. 79)! The Eucharistic mystery is "too great a gift", my Venerable Predecessor Pope John Paul ii wrote, "to tolerate ambiguity and depreciation", particularly when "stripped of its sacrificial meaning, it is celebrated as if it were simply a fraternal banquet" (*Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, n. 10). At the root of the various motivations adopted is a mindset that cannot accept the possibility of a real divine intervention in this world, to help the human being. The human being, however, "is unable of himself to overcome the assaults of evil successfully, so that everyone feels as though bound by chains" (Pastoral Constitution on the Church, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 13). The confession of a redeeming intervention of God to change this situation of alienation and sin is seen by those who share the deist vision as integralist, and the same opinion has been expressed with regard to a sacramental sign that makes the Redemptive sacrifice present. More acceptable, in their eyes, would be the celebration of a sign that corresponded with a vague feeling of community.

Worship, however, cannot be born from our imagination; it would be a cry in the darkness or a

mere affirmation of the self. The true Liturgy presupposes that God responds and shows us how we may adore him. "The Church is able to celebrate and adore the mystery of Christ present in the Eucharist precisely because Christ first gave himself to her in the sacrifice of the Cross" (Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*, n. 14). The Church lives on this presence and her *raison d'être* is to disseminate this presence throughout the world.

"Stay with us, [Lord!]" (cf. Lk 24: 29) is the prayer of the sons and daughters of Brazil with a view to the 16th National Eucharistic Congress that will be held in a month's time in Brasília. Thus it will see the golden jubilee of its foundation enriched with the "gold" of eternity present in time: Jesus in the Eucharist. May he truly be the heart of Brazil, from which comes the strength for all Brazilians, men and women, to recognize each other and to help each other as brothers and sisters, as members of the total Christ! Those who desire to live have somewhere to live, have something to live for. Let them approach, believe, and enter, to be part of the Body of Christ, and they will be invigorated! Today, and here, I wish all this for the portion of this Body which is the North II Region, as I impart the Apostolic Blessing to each one of you, to all who work with you and to all the Christian faithful.

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