



The Holy See

**VIDEO MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO MARK THE BEATIFICATION OF JOSÉ GREGORIO HERNÁNDEZ CISNEROS**

[CARACAS, 30 APRIL 2021]

[Multimedia]

*Dear Brothers in the Episcopate,
Dear Venezuelans,
Brothers all in the Lord,*

I greet you with affection on the occasion of the beatification of the Venerable Doctor José Gregorio Hernández Cisneros. I know how eagerly you have been awaiting for so many years the moment when the Church would confirm something in which you firmly believed: that the people's doctor stands close to God, and that together with Nuestra Señora de Coromoto, he intercedes for his compatriots and for all of us. I confess to you that I have never met a Venezuelan, here in the Vatican, neither in the square nor in a private audience, who, halfway through the conversation, did not finally say to me: when will Gregorio be beatified? They carried this in their souls. Well, now this wish is being fulfilled.

Dr José Gregorio offers himself to us Christians and to all people of good will as an example of a believer, a disciple of Christ, who made the Gospel the criterion of his life, sought his vocation, kept the commandments, participated daily in the Eucharist, devoted time to prayer and believed in eternal life, as a model of personal goodness and civic and religious virtues, of openness, of sensitivity in the face of pain, of modesty and humility in his professional life and practice, and also as a man who loved knowledge, research, science, at the service of health and teaching. He is a model of holiness committed to the defence of life, in the challenges of history and, in particular, as a paradigm of service to his neighbour, like a Good Samaritan, without excluding anyone. He is a man of universal service.

One of the most relevant and fascinating aspects of his personality was that of being a witness to going beyond himself and to serving citizens. A service understood from the example that Christ left us during the Last Supper, when he began to wash the feet of his disciples and everyone because he loved everyone, even Judas, even though he knew that he would betray him. Jesus did not take revenge on anyone, he loved everyone.

And at this moment Jesus leaves a mandate to his disciples: wash one another's feet. It seems important to me to comment on "one another", because the Lord exhorts us not only to be active subjects of service, but also to have the humility to let others wash our feet. And what does this washing of each other's feet mean today, I wonder, for all of us, and specifically for you, who today are celebrating the beatification of this great washer of feet?

For example, it means welcoming each other, receiving each other, seeing the other as an equal, someone like me, without disdain. Not disregarding anyone. It is serving one another, being willing to serve, but also letting others help us, serve us. Helping and letting ourselves be helped. Another example is to forgive one another, because we must forgive and allow ourselves to be forgiven. To feel forgiven. Ultimately, to wash one another's feet is to love one another.

Sometimes we think that no one needs help, that we are autonomous, that we do not need anything, not even forgiveness. Don't we? We all need help, everyone. We all need forgiveness. Jesus said something very beautiful: "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone" (*Jn 8:7*); whoever does not have something within him to repent for, let him accuse others. Sometimes we become a family — I am thinking for example of a household — of accusers of one another or a people of accusers of one another. This is not the path taught to us by the Blessed we are celebrating today, which is instead that of service, of listening to each other, and of forgiving each other and allowing ourselves to be forgiven.

The beatification of Dr José Gregorio takes place at a particular, difficult time for you. Like my brother bishops, I am well aware of the situation you are experiencing, and I am aware that your prolonged suffering and anguish have been aggravated by the terrible Covid-19 pandemic that is affecting us all. I am particularly mindful today of the many deaths, the many infected by the coronavirus who have paid with their lives for carrying out their duties in precarious conditions. This same pandemic, which today affects this great feast of faith, of the beatification, and which reduces it, in order to avoid contagion for reasons of safety, of health, keeps us all at home, and it does not allow us to go out in the street to celebrate, to shout, no, because the pandemic is dangerous. And I accompany you in this — allow me to use the term — "pandemic" celebration, that is, a celebration with nothing, because of the pain of the pandemic. I also have in mind all those who have left the country in search of better living conditions, as well as those who are deprived of their freedom and those who lack the necessities of life. You are all fellow citizens of the Blessed, all of you. And you all have the same rights. I accompany you with love, all of you. And just as I know well the sufferings, I also know the faith and the great hopes of the Venezuelan

people.

The beatification of Dr Hernández is a special blessing from God for Venezuela, and it invites us to convert to greater solidarity with one another, so that together we can give the response of common good so necessary for the country to be revived and reborn after the pandemic in a spirit of reconciliation. It is a grace that we must ask for: the spirit of reconciliation, because there are always problems in families, in cities, in society; there are people who look at each other sideways, who look at each other wrongly, and there is always a need for reconciliation, for the outstretched hand! And an outstretched hand is a good social investment.

Therefore, in the midst of all these difficulties, I ask all of you who love Dr José Gregorio so much, to follow his admirable example of selfless service to others. I sincerely believe that this moment of national unity, gathered around the figure of the people's doctor, is a special moment for Venezuela and it requires you to go further, to take real steps towards unity, without letting yourselves be overcome by despair.

Following the example of Dr José Gregorio, may you be able to recognize each other as equals, as brothers and sisters, as children of the same country. May you show your willingness to serve, and have sufficient humility to let yourselves be served, to help and let yourselves be helped, to forgive and let yourselves be forgiven. Don't forget: for each other, or as that elderly woman used to say, "all for one". Reciprocal, always. I pray to God for reconciliation and peace among Venezuelans. I would like to visit you. May public institutions always offer security and trust to all, and may the people of this beautiful land always find opportunities for human development and coexistence.

I pray, dear brothers and sisters, that the new Blessed will inspire, in particular, all leaders, all of them: trade unions, academics, politicians, businessmen, religious, everyone, university students and others, to make a serious effort to achieve unity. An old proverb says "either we save everyone, or no one is saved". The path is a joint one, it is for everyone. Let us seek the path of national unity, and this for the good of Venezuela. An operational unity in which everyone, with seriousness and sincerity, starting with mutual respect and recognition, putting the common good before any other interest, works for unity, peace and prosperity, so that the people can live with normality, productivity, democratic stability, security, justice and hope.

I pray that, all together, we may recover that Venezuela in which all people know they have a place, in which everyone can find a future. And I ask the Lord that no external intervention may prevent you from travelling along this path of national unity. How I wish I could visit you, at least to show my accompaniment on this path. I pray to the Virgen de Coromoto, Patroness of this beloved and beautiful Nation, and I pray to Blessed José Gregorio Hernández for all of you. And I ask you not to forget to pray for me. Onwards! All together, always, following the example of José Gregorio. Do not be discouraged. May God bless you and may the Virgin protect you.

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