



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

TO MEXICO

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MEETING WITH FAMILIES

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

“Victor Manuel Reyna” Stadium, Tuxtla Gutiérrez

Monday, 15 February 2016

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I thank God for being here, on *Chiapaneca* soil. It feels good to be here on this soil, on this land; it is good to be here in this place which, with you here, has a family flavour, a home flavour. I give thanks for your faces and your presence; I give thanks to God because of the heart-beat of his presence in your families. I also thank you, families and friends, for giving us your witness, for opening to us the doors of your homes, the doors of your lives; you have allowed us to sit with you sharing both in the bread that nourishes you and in the sweat of your brow as you face the difficulties of every day. It is the bread representing the joys, the hopes and the hard sweat with which you confront sadness, disillusion and failings. I thank you for allowing me to enter into your families, your homes, and to sit at your tables.

Manuel, before thanking you for your testimony, I want to thank your parents who both knelt in front of you holding up the paper you read from. What a striking image! Two parents on their knees before their son who is ill. Let us never forget this image. They probably fall out now and again but which husband and wife doesn't? And when mothers-in-law are involved, even more so, but this does not matter: they love each other. They have shown us that they love each other and, out of this love, they can kneel before their infirm son. Thank you friends for this testimony which

you gave us and I encourage you to carry on forward. Thank you! And you, Manuel, I thank you for your witness and especially for your example. I liked the expression you used “to put your heart into it” [*echarle ganas*] describing the attitude you took after speaking with your parents. You began to put your heart into your life, your family, your friends; you put your heart into us gathered here. Thank you. I believe that this is what the Holy Spirit always wants to do in our midst: to put a new heart into us, giving us reasons to keep on taking risks for the good of the family, dreaming and building a life that has this sense of home, of family. Do we put our heart into it? [They reply: *yes*]. Thank you!

This is something which God the Father has always dreamt of and for which God the Father has fought for a very long time. When everything seemed lost that afternoon in the Garden of Eden, God the Father put a new heart into that young couple and told them that everything was not lost. And when the people of Israel felt that they could not go on journeying through the desert, God the Father put his heart into it by giving them manna from heaven. And when the fullness of time came, God the Father put his heart into it, into humanity, by sending us his Son.

Similarly, all of us here have had this experience, in different moments and different ways; God the Father has put his heart into it for us. We can ask ourselves: why? Because he cannot do otherwise. God our Father does not know how to do anything else but love us and put his best into us, encouraging us, helping us move forward... for he can not do anything else, because his name is love, his name is gift, his name is self-giving, his name is mercy. This he has shown us with complete power and clarity in Jesus, his Son, who risked everything to the end so as to once again make possible the Kingdom of God. A Kingdom that invites us to share in a new mindset, that puts into motion a dynamic power capable of opening the heavens, capable of opening our hearts, our minds, our hands, and capable of challenging us with new possibilities. This is a Kingdom which has the feeling of family, the flavour of a life shared. In Jesus and with Jesus this Kingdom is possible. He is capable of changing our perspectives, attitudes, and feelings, which are often watered-down, into the wine of celebration. He can heal our hearts and invite us again and again, seventy times seven, to begin anew. He can make all things new.

Manuel, you asked me to pray for the many adolescents who are disillusioned and on a wrong path. How well we know this. Many adolescents who are deflated, tired and without aspirations. And as you yourself rightly said, this attitude often comes from a feeling of loneliness, from not having someone to talk to. Think of fathers and mothers: do they speak to their sons or daughters or are they always busy or in a rush? Do they play with their children? This reminds me of the witness which Beatrice gave us. Beatrice, you said: “the struggle has always been difficult because of uncertainty and loneliness”. How many times did you feel singled out, judged: “that one”? Let us think of all those people, of all those women who go through what Beatrice went through. Uncertainty, insufficiency, and often not having the bare essentials, can lead to despair, can make us deeply anxious because we cannot see a way to go on, especially when we have children in our care. Uncertainty is not only a threat to our stomach (which is already serious), but

it can also threaten our soul, demoralizing us and taking away our energy so that we seek apparent solutions that in the end solve nothing. And you were brave Beatrice, thank you. There is a kind of uncertainty which can be very dangerous, which can creep in surreptitiously; it is the uncertainty born of solitude and isolation. And isolation is always a bad counsellor.

Manuel and Beatrice both used, without realizing it, the same expression; both showed us that very often the greatest temptation we face is to cut ourselves off, and far from putting our heart into things, this attitude of isolation ends up, like a moth, corroding and withering our souls.

The way to overcome the uncertainty and isolation which makes us vulnerable to so many apparent solutions — as Beatrice mentioned — can be found on different levels. One is through legislation which protects and guarantees the bare necessities of life so that every home and every person can develop through education and dignified employment. There is, on the other hand, what the witness of Humberto and Claudia made evident when they explained how they tried to convey to others the love of God that they experienced through service and generous giving. Laws and personal commitment make a good duo that can break the spiral of uncertainty. And you have the inspiration, you pray, and you are united to Jesus, and you are involved in the life of the Church. You used a beautiful expression: “Let us take communion with the brother who is weak, ill, needy, in prison”. Thank you. Thank you.

Today we see how on different fronts the family is weakened and questioned. It is regarded as a model which has done its time, but which has no place in our societies; these, claiming to be modern, increasingly favour a model based on isolation. Societies become increasingly inoculated — they refer to themselves as societies which are free, democratic, sovereign — but they are inoculated by ideological colonizations which destroy; and we end up being ideological colonies that then have a destructive effect on families, the family cell, which is the basis of every healthy society.

It is true that living in family is not always easy, and can often be painful and stressful but, as I have often said referring to the Church, I prefer a wounded family that makes daily efforts to put love into play, to a family and society that is sick from isolationism or a habitual fear of love. I prefer a family that makes repeated efforts to begin again, to a family and society that is narcissistic and obsessed with luxury and comfort.

How many children do you have? “No, we don’t have children as we like to go on holidays, be tourists, and I want to buy a villa”. Luxury and comfort without children, and then, when you want a child, it’s too late. This is so harmful, is it not? I prefer a family with tired faces from generous giving, to a family with faces full of makeup that know nothing of tenderness and compassion. I prefer a man and a woman, don Aniceto and his wife, with faces that are wrinkled due to the daily struggles over the 50 years of strong married love; and here we have them, and their son has learned the lesson from them and is now 25 years married. These are families. When I asked don

Aniceto and his wife which of them showed more patience during these last 50 years, they replied “Both of us, Father”. Because in order to get to the point they have reached after 50 years, you need patience, love and mutual forgiveness. “Father, a perfect family never gets into arguments”. This is not true, it is quite helpful when couples argue now and again and when the odd plate is thrown: it’s okay, do not be afraid. My only advice is that they never let the sun set without making peace, because if they are at odds with each other at the end of the day, they will wake up to a cold war, a cold war is very dangerous in the family because it undermines, from within, the hard earned wrinkles of conjugal fidelity. Thank you for the testimony of loving each other for over 50 years. Thank you.

And speaking of wrinkles, to change the subject a little, I remember the testimony of a great actress — an actress of Latin American films — almost in her sixties, and showing some wrinkles on her face. She was advised to have some work done on her face so as to carry on working successfully. Her response was quite clear: “These wrinkles cost me a lot of work, much effort, much pain and a full life, so I would never even dream of touching them; they are the signs of my life history. And I am still a great actress”. The same thing happens in marriage. Married life has to be renewed every day. And, as I said before, I prefer families with wrinkles, with wounds, and scars, but who carry on moving forward; for these wounds, scars and wrinkles are the fruit of a faithful love which has had its share of difficulties. Love is not easy, it is not easy, but the most beautiful thing is when a man and a woman can offer each other true love and offer it for life.

I have been asked to pray for you and I want to do so now. You Mexicans have something extra; you run ahead with an advantage. You have a Mother, *la Guadalupana*. *La Guadalupana* wanted to visit this land and this gives us the certainty of her intercession so that our dream, which we call the family, may not be lost through uncertainty or solitude. She is a Mother and is always ready to defend our families, our future; she is always ready to put her heart into it by giving us her Son. For this reason, I invite you, as you are, without moving around too much, to hold hands and address her together: “Hail Mary...”.

And let us not forget St Joseph, quiet, a worker, but always at the forefront looking after his family. Thank you, and may God bless you. And pray for me.

And now I would like to invite, in the context of this celebration of the family, married couples here present, in silence, to renew their marriage vows. And those who are preparing for marriage, ask for the grace of a faithful family, full of love. In silence, renew your marriage vows and fiancés pray for the grace of fidelity and love in the family.
