



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO CHILE AND PERU

(15-22 JANUARY 2018)

MEETING WITH THE PERUVIAN BISHOPS

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER

Archbishop's House (Lima)

Sunday, 21 January 2018

[Multimedia]

Dear Brother Bishops,

Thank you for the kind words addressed to me by the Cardinal Archbishop of Lima and the President of the Episcopal Conference in the name of all present. I have looked forward to being here with you. I recall with pleasure your visit *ad limina* last year. At the time, I think had much to discuss, so what I am now going to say will be more brief.

These days I have spent among you have been very intense and gratifying. I have been able to learn about and experience some of the different realities that shape these lands, and to share at first hand the faith of God's holy and faithful people, which does us so much good. Thank you for the opportunity to "touch" the faith of the people that God has entrusted to you. Here, in fact, it is impossible not to touch it. If you do not touch the faith of the people, the faith of the people does not touch you. But to be there, and to see the streets crowded with people, is a grace for which we should fall to our knees and give thanks.

The theme of this Visit speaks to us of *unity* and *hope*. This is a demanding yet exciting programme, which makes us think us of the heroic accomplishments of Saint Turibius of Mogrovejo, archbishop of this see and patron of the Latin American episcopate, an example of a "builder of ecclesial unity", as my predecessor, Saint John Paul II described him during his first

Apostolic Visit to this land.[1]

It is significant that this holy bishop is frequently portrayed as a “new Moses”. As you know, the Vatican has a picture in which Saint Turibius appears crossing a great river whose waters open before him like the Red Sea, so that he could get to the other shore, where a numerous group of natives awaited him. Behind Saint Turibius is a great crowd, representing the faithful people who follow their shepherd in the task of evangelization.[2] This beautiful image in the Vatican Museums can serve to anchor my reflection with you. *Saint Turibius, the man who wanted to get to the other shore.*

We see him from the time in which he accepted the mandate to come to these lands with the mission to be a father and a shepherd. He left the security of familiar surroundings in order to enter a completely new universe, unknown and filled with challenges. He journeyed towards a promised land guided by faith as “the assurance of things hoped for” (*Heb 11:1*). His faith and his trust in the Lord impelled him, then and for the rest of his life, to get to the other shore, where the Lord himself was waiting for him in the midst of a great crowd.

1. He wanted to get to the other shore in search of the distant and dispersed. To do so, he had to leave behind the comfort of the bishop’s residence and traverse the territory entrusted to him in constant pastoral visits; he tried to visit and stay wherever he was needed, and how greatly was he needed! He went out to encounter everyone, along paths that, in the words of his secretary, were meant more for goats than for people. Turibius had to face greatly differing climates and landscapes, “of the twenty-two years – and some – of his episcopate, eighteen were spent outside of Lima, outside of his city, crossing his territory three times”. [3] That territory extended from Panama to the beginning of the Captaincy of Chile. I don’t know where it began back then – perhaps on the highlands of Iquique, but I’m not sure. All the way to the Captaincy of Chile. Like one of your own dioceses, no more! In eighteen years, he crossed his territory three times. He knew that this was the one way to be a pastor: to be close to his own, dispensing the sacraments, and he constantly exhorted his priests to do the same. He did so not only by words, but by his witness in the front lines of evangelization. Today we would call him a “street” bishop. A bishop with shoes worn out by walking, by constant travel, by setting out to “preach the Gospel to all: to all places, on all occasions, without hesitation, reluctance and fear. The joy of the Gospel is for all people: no one can be excluded”. [4]. How much Saint Turibius knew this! Without fear and without hesitation he immersed himself in our continent in order to proclaim the good news.

2. He wanted to get to the other shore not only geographically but also culturally. Consequently, he worked in many ways for an evangelization in the native languages. With the Third Council of Lima he provided for catechisms to be compiled and translated into Quechua and Aymara. He encouraged the clergy to learn the language of their flock in order to administer the sacraments to them in a way they could understand. I think of the liturgical reform that Pius XII began to introduce for the whole Church... Visiting and living with his people, he realized that it was not

enough just to be there physically, but to learn to speak the language of others, for only in this way could the Gospel be understood and touch the heart. How necessary is this vision for us, the pastors of the twenty-first century! For we have to learn completely new languages, like that, for example, of this, our digital age. To know the real language of our young people, our families, our children... As Saint Turibius clearly realized, it is not enough just to be present and occupy space; we have to be able to generate processes in people's lives, so that the faith can take root and be meaningful. And to do that, we have to be able to speak their language. We need to get to the places where new stories and paradigms are being born, to bring the word of Jesus to the very heart of our cities and our peoples.[5] The evangelization of culture requires us to enter into the heart of culture itself, so that it can be illuminated from within by the Gospel. I was moved, the day before yesterday, in Puerto Maldonado, when, amid all those native peoples from different ethnic groups, three men brought me a stole, all painted and wearing their native dress. They were permanent deacons. Take heart, as Turibius did. At that time there were no permanent deacons, there were catechists in the people's own language and culture, and off he went. I was moved to see those permanent deacons.

3. Saint Turibius wanted to get to the other shore of charity. For our patron, there could be no evangelization without charity. He knew that the supreme form of evangelization is to model in our own lives the self-giving of Jesus Christ, out of love for every man and woman. The children of God and the children of the devil are revealed in this way: all who do not practise justice are not from God, nor are those who do not love their brothers and sisters (cf. *1 Jn* 3:10). In his visits, he was able to see the abuses and excesses that the original peoples had suffered, and thus he was unafraid, in 1585, to excommunicate the *Corregidor* of Cajatambo, setting himself against a whole system of corruption and a web of interests which "drew upon him the enmity of many", including the Viceroy.[6] Such, we see, is the pastor who knows that spiritual good can never be separated from just material good, and all the more so when the integrity and dignity of persons is at risk. An episcopal spirit of prophecy unafraid of denouncing abuses and excesses committed against our people. In this way, Turibius reminds society as a whole, and each community, that charity must always be accompanied by justice. And that there can be no authentic evangelization that does not point out and denounce every sin against the lives of our brothers and sisters, especially against the lives of those who are most vulnerable. This is a warning against any attempt to flirt with the world; it only ties our hands, only to receive a few crumbs in return; the freedom of the Gospel...

4. He wanted to get to the other shore in the formation of his priests. He founded the first post-Tridentine seminary in this part of the world, thus encouraging the training of the native clergy. He realized that it was not enough to visit everywhere and to speak the same language: the Church needed to raise up her own local pastors and thus become a fruitful mother. To this end, he defended the ordination of the *mestizos* – a controversial issue at that time – and sought to make others see that if the clergy needed to be different in any area, it had to be by virtue of their holiness and not their racial origin.[7] This formation was not limited to seminary studies, but

continued through the constant visits that he undertook. He was close to his priests. With his visits, he was able to see firsthand the “state of his priests” and to show his concern for them. The story goes that on Christmas Eve his sister gave him a shirt that he could wear for the holidays. That same day he went to visit a priest and, seeing his living conditions, took off the shirt and gave it to him.^[8] He was a pastor who knew his priests. A pastor who tried to visit them, to accompany them, to encourage them and to admonish them. He reminded his priests that they were pastors and not shopkeepers, and so they had to care for and defend the *indios* as their children.^[9] Yet he did not do this from a desk, and so he knew his sheep and they recognized, in his voice, the voice of the good shepherd.

5. He wanted to get to the other shore of unity. In an admirable and prophetic way, he worked to open up possibilities for communion and participation among the different members of God’s people. Saint John Paul II mentioned this when speaking to the bishops in these lands. He noted that: “The Third Council of Lima was the result of that effort, guided, encouraged and directed by Saint Turibius; it bore fruit in a wealth of unity in faith, pastoral and organizational norms, and useful insights for the desired integration of Latin America”.^[10] We know very well that this unity and consensus emerged from great tensions and conflicts. We cannot deny tensions and the differences: they exist, and life is not possible without conflict. Yet they require us, if we are men and Christians, to face them and to deal with them. But to deal with them in a spirit of unity, in honest and sincere dialogue, face to face, taking care not to fall into temptation to ignore the past, or to remain prisoners, lacking the vision to discern paths of unity and peace. It is a source of encouragement, in our journey as an episcopal conference, to know that unity will always prevail over conflict.^[11] Dear brother bishops, work for unity. Do not remain prisoners of divisions that create cliques and hamper our vocation to be a sacrament of communion. Remember: what was attractive about the early church was to see how they loved one another. That was – and is and always will be – the best way to evangelize.

6. The moment came for Saint Turibius to get to the final shore, to the land of which he had a foretaste on every shore he left. This time, however, he did not leave alone. As in the picture I spoke of previously, he went to meet the saints surrounded by a great crowd. He was a pastor who packed “his bags” with names and faces. They were his passport to heaven. I would not like to pass over this final chord, the moment when the shepherd surrendered his soul to God. He did so in a hut, the midst of his people, while a native played a song on his *chirimía* so that the soul of his pastor would feel at peace. Brothers, would that when we undertake our final journey, we might have this same experience. Let us ask the Lord to grant this to us.^[12]

Let us pray for one another, and pray for me. Thank you.

[1] *Address to the Peruvian Bishops* (2 February 1985), 3.

[2] Cf. *Miracle of Saint Turibius*, Vatican Pinacoteca.

[3] JORGE MARIO BERGOGLIO, *Homily at Mass*, Aparecida (16 May 2007).

[4] Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 23.

[5] Cf. *Ibid.*, 74.

[6] Cf. ERNESTO ROJAS INGUNZA, *El Perú de los Santos*, in: KATHY PERALES YSLA (ed.), *Cinco Santos del Perú. Vida, obra y tiempo*, Lima (2016), 57.

[7] Cf. JOSÉANTONIO BENITO RODRÍGUEZ, *Santo Toribio de Mogrovejo*, in KATHY PERALES YSLA (ed.), *Cinco Santos del Perú. Vida, obra y tiempo*, Lima (2016), 178.

[8] Cf. *ibid.*, 180.

[9] Cf. JUAN VILLEGAS, *Fiel y evangelizador. Santo Toribio de Mogrovejo, patrono de los obispos de América Latina*, Montevideo (1984), 22.

[10] *Address to the Peruvian Bishops* (2 February 1985), 3.

[11] Cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 226-230.

[12] Cf. JORGE MARIO BERGOGLIO, *Homily at Mass*, Aparecida (16 May 2007).