



The Holy See

JOHN PAUL II

GENERAL AUDIENCE

Wednesday 7 August 2002

1. *Last Sunday, at the Angelus*, I wished to return spiritually to Toronto, where the 17th World Youth Day took place. Today I would like to reflect on the subsequent stages of my [Apostolic Journey in Guatemala and in Mexico](#), where the Lord granted me the joy of proclaiming Saints and Blesseds outstanding sons of the American continent.

First of all I feel obliged to renew my warm gratitude to the political, administrative and military authorities and to all the institutional organizations of the two countries for their welcome and hospitality to me and my collaborators.

I also extend my gratitude to the Bishops, priests and religious, to the volunteers and families who, with generous availability, did all they could to welcome the pilgrims and ensure that everything went smoothly. The overall assistance contributed to the fact that each stage of my pilgrimage was enriched by an atmosphere of spiritual joy and festivity. However, I owe my most heartfelt and affectionate thanks to the Christian people in Guatemala and in Mexico who came to meet me in great numbers. In the intense participation of these brothers and sisters I could discern the faith that motivates them, their filial attachment to the Successor of Peter and their enthusiasm at belonging to the Catholic Church.

2. The reason for my visit to Guatemala City was the canonization of Brother Pedro de San José de Betancur, a native of Tenerife, who crossed the ocean to go and evangelize the poor and indigenous peoples in Cuba, in Honduras and then in Guatemala, which he loved to call his "promised land". He was a deeply prayerful man and an undaunted apostle of divine mercy. He drew the energy for his ministry from contemplating the mysteries of Bethlehem and Calvary. Prayer became the source of his apostolic zeal and courage. Humble and austere, he knew how

to perceive the face of Christ in his brothers and sisters, especially the most forsaken, and for anyone in need he was "a man who made himself charity". His example is an invitation to practise merciful love toward our brothers and sisters, especially those who are the most abandoned. May his intercession inspire and sustain the faithful of Guatemala and of the whole world to open their hearts to Christ and to their brethren.

3. The last stage of my pilgrimage was Mexico City, where in the Basilica of Guadalupe, on two distinct occasions, I had the joy of raising three sons of that beloved land to the honours of the altar: St Juan Diego, the Indian to whom Our Lady appeared on Mount Tepeyac; the Blessed Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles who, in 1700, offered their blood to remain faithful to their Baptism and to the Catholic Church.

Juan Diego, the first Indian to be canonized, was a man of great simplicity, humble and generous. He was closely allied with Our Lady of Guadalupe, whose mestizo face is full of tender motherly love for all Mexicans. The event of Guadalupe was the beginning of evangelization in Mexico and is a model of perfectly inculturated evangelization. It shows that the Christian message can be received without our being obliged to give up our own culture.

Bl. Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles are the fruit of the holiness of the first evangelization among the Zapotec Indians. Upright fathers of families, they knew how to be faithful in performing their duty, ever guided by the teaching of the Gospel. They did not have to reject their traditional indigenous culture. Their lives are an admirable example of how one can reach the heights of holiness, while being faithful to an ancient culture, thanks to the recreating grace of Christ.

May these faithful disciples of Christ, who were devoted like sons to Mary, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother and Queen of America, whom I constantly remembered during my Pastoral Visit, sustain the missionary zeal of believers in America at the service of the new evangelization.

May they be for the entire People of God, an incentive to build a new humanity who will be inspired by the eternal values of the Gospel.

I am pleased to greet the members of the Maltese Association for the Transport of the Sick to Lourdes: may the Lord always sustain you with his gifts of strength and healing. Upon all the English-speaking pilgrims present at this Audience I cordially invoke an abundance of grace and peace in the Lord!

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