



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE
GATHERED THE VATICAN BASILICA**

Wednesday, 7 February 1979

Dear Boys and Girls!

Dear Young People!

Here we are again, in St Peter's Basilica, for the usual weekly Audience. Today, too, you have come in large numbers to meet the Pope. Deeply appreciating this testimony of faith and filial respect, I thank you sincerely and greet you with affection.

Your youth, your liveliness, your joy, are very bracing, and stimulate an increasingly intense commitment in service of your souls.

1. The first thought I wish to express to you today concerns, as is obvious, my recent journey to Latin America, which represents nearly half of the Catholic population on earth. I think you will have been able to follow it, at least partly, on television or in the newspapers.

My heart is full of unforgettable memories: this stupendous, though tiring, journey, was a real grace of the Lord, certainly obtained for me by my venerated predecessors, whose great name I bear: John XXIII, Paul VI and Pope John Paul I. They accompanied me in the long and consoling pilgrimage from Santo Domingo to Mexico City, from Guadalajara to Puebla, from Oaxaca to Monterrey, in a joyful and pressing programme of appointments and ceremonies.

It was a meeting with millions and millions of persons who, urged by faith and hope, gathered round the Vicar of Christ. It was, above all, a continual meeting of prayer and meditation. I was able to speak to bishops, priests, men and women religious, seminarians, workers, University students, school children, campesinos, Indios, the sick, the underprivileged, and children, as well

as to leaders of the nations and governments. I spoke in stadiums, in the squares, in the streets, in the great Sanctuaries, in the cathedrals, among the mountains of the Indios, in the "barrios" of the poor, in hospitals. Everywhere, the crowds flocked around the Pope as they once flocked around Jesus.

And at this moment I would like to address a fatherly thought to all the young people and children, so ardent and gay, that I met. In particular, I am glad to remember the sick children of Mexico City and the little Indios of Cuilapan.

2. The second thought concerns the assembly of the Latin-American Episcopate, gathered in the city of Puebla.

I had the fortune to open this third Assembly personally on Saturday 27 January, when I presided over the concelebration in the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and then on Sunday 28 January, when I delivered the opening address in the Chapel of the Major Seminary at Puebla.

It is a question—as is known—of the third meeting of the Episcopate of Latin America: the first one took place at Rio de Janeiro in 1955; the second, at Medellín in 1968.

There are present at Puebla twenty-one Cardinals, sixty-six archbishops, one hundred and thirty bishops, forty-five men and women religious, thirty-three men and women laity, four deacons, four campesinos, four Indios, and five non-Catholic observers.

This Assembly has as subject of discussion a very important problem: "the evangelization in the present and the future of Latin America". Therefore I recommend it warmly to your fervent prayers.

3. I would like to conclude the information, just given, with a thought on "Episcopal Collegiality", of which the second Vatican Council speaks at length in the Constitution *Lumen Gentium*.

You know that Jesus chose the twelve Apostles and conferred on them alone his powers for the accomplishment of their mission: to announce the Truth, to save and sanctify souls, to guide the Church.

He set Peter at the head of the twelve, as the foundation of the Church and the universal Pastor of all souls, with the task of "strengthening his brothers", having from the Lord special assistance in order not to err in the doctrine about faith and morality. The mission and the powers of the Apostles passed to the Bishops; the mission and the powers of Peter passed to the Pope, and, that is, to the Bishop of Rome, his successor.

You see how, in the will and plan of Jesus, the Church is one Body, perfectly united and linked

together: the Bishops form a unity, a "collegiality" with Peter, that is, with the Pope, as their Head.

So by means of the Bishops we ascend to the Apostles and from the Apostles we arrive at Jesus and, through Jesus, we reach the Holy Trinity.

In order to be sure that we really love Jesus, we must be united with our own Bishop. The Constitution *Lumen Gentium* rightly affirms that the Lord Jesus Christ is present in the midst of believers in the person of the Bishops, assisted by the priests (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 28).

Therefore, dear young people and children, love your Bishop, who is a father, a friend and a teacher; pray for him and with him; listen to his words and carry out his initiatives; make his pastoral ministry beautiful and consoling. Let the meeting with the Bishop always be a joy and a feast, because it is a meeting with Jesus!

With this wish I entrust you to the motherly love of Our Lady of Guadalupe and I willingly bless you all.

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