



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II TO THE PONTIFICAL COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA

Friday, 21 January 2005

Your Eminences,

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate,

1. I greet you all with great joy, Counsellors and Members of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America, who are taking part in this Plenary Meeting whose theme is: *"Sunday Mass, the centre of Christian life in Latin America"*. Your Continent has a very special place in my heart because of the large number of Catholics and the religious vitality that are features of the countries of which it consists. I personally cherish pleasant memories of my Pastoral Visits to your countries.

I am deeply grateful to Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re for his kind and affectionate words, introducing your work in these days.

2. I am pleased that in this year dedicated to the Eucharist you have chosen to reflect on the various initiatives in order to *"experience Sunday as the day of the Lord and the day of the Church"* (Apostolic Letter *Mane Nobiscum Domine*, n. 23). It was not the Church who chose this day but the Risen Christ himself, and this is why the faithful should welcome it with gratitude, making Sunday a sign of their fidelity to the Lord and an indispensable element of Christian life.

3. I already wrote in my Apostolic Letter *Dies Domini*: "It is crucially important that all the faithful should be convinced that they cannot live their faith or share fully in the life of the Christian community unless they take part regularly in the Sunday Eucharistic Assembly" (n. 81). Taking part in Sunday Mass is not only an important obligation, as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* points out clearly (cf. n. 1389), but first and foremost a profound need of every member of the faithful. It is impossible to live faith without taking part regularly in Sunday Mass, the Sacrifice of the Redemption, the common Banquet of the Word of God and of the Eucharistic Bread, centre of Christian life.

4. The importance of the topic demands of us, Pastors of the Church, a new effort to make people discover the central place of Sunday in the ecclesial and social life of today's men and women. For all Bishops and priests it is a challenge to summon the faithful to constant participation in Sunday Mass, an encounter with the living Christ.

You therefore need to focus your efforts on giving them a better and more careful instruction and catechesis on the Eucharist, as well as watching that the liturgy is dignified and decorous so that it inspires true, authentic devotion before the immensity of the Eucharistic Mystery.

Sunday must be appropriately prepared by the celebrant so that his spiritual disposition then shines forth through his gestures and words, and in his properly prepared homily. Special attention should be paid to choosing and arranging the hymns, symbols and other means that enrich the liturgy, always with due respect for the established norms and making full use of all the spiritual and pastoral riches of the Roman Missal and the measures proposed by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments.

5. I then ask you, in union with the priests, Religious and faithful, to devote your greatest effort to thinking and deepening this essential dimension of the sacramental life of the Church, and to strive to inspire an ever greater love for the Mystery of the Eucharist in your Dioceses. This is no easy task and will require the collaboration of all: priests and deacons, consecrated people and faithful lay persons who are present in parishes or who belong to associations or ecclesial movements. Accept everyone's collaboration, join forces and work in communion!

6. I place all these desires and the proposals that emerged at this Plenary Meeting at the feet of the Blessed Virgin Mary, venerated throughout America as Our Lady of Guadalupe. We must imitate her in her relationship with the Most Holy Sacrament (cf. *Mane Nobiscum Domine*, n. 31). May she intercede for the outcome of your reflections during these days so that the conclusions you have reached may take shape in more determined and firmer actions, in order to ensure that the love of the faithful for Jesus in the Eucharist constantly increases and that they take advantage of the priceless fruits they can obtain by taking part in this Mystery.

With these sentiments, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing to you all.

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