



The Holy See

***LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 50th ANNIVERSARY
OF THE INSTITUTION OF THE LATIN AMERICAN COUNCIL***

*To Cardinal Francisco Javier Errázuriz Ossa
Archbishop of Santiago de Chile
President of the Latin American Episcopal Council*

Fifty years ago my Venerable Predecessor Pius XII, fulfilling the desire expressed by the General Conference of Latin American Bishops who met in Rio de Janeiro from 25 July to 4 August 1955, instituted the Latin American Episcopal Council (CELAM) with the purpose of sustaining the pastoral work of the Bishops and, at the same time, of responding to some of the serious problems of the Church in Latin America (cf. Apostolic Letter *Ad Ecclesiam Christi*, 29 June 1955).

CELAM in this half century has offered its service to the Episcopates of the Latin American Nations by helping to confront the challenges of the Latin American Subcontinent and combining efforts in an ecclesial spirit, engaging from within the Episcopal community to give life to what over the years has come to be called the "new evangelization".

Knowing that Jesus Christ is the centre of the Catholic faith and that the purpose of the new evangelization is contributing to ensure that every person encounters the living Christ, CELAM has intensely inspired the work of the Latin American Episcopate so that it testifies to what it means to be faithful disciples of Christ and nourishes the proper faith through listening to the Word of God.

From the start, CELAM was called to offer particular support to promoting vocations, so that they may be many and holy. Looking to the future, CELAM must continue to offer its important contribution and its decisive backing in this field, in order to reveal the signs of the call and to accompany the response.

I would like to recommend to CELAM's reflection the pastoral care of the family, besieged in our

days by serious challenges represented by the different ideologies and by customs that undermine the very foundation of marriage and of the Christian family. Attention must then be given to family catechesis and to a positive and correct vision of matrimony and of conjugal morality, thus contributing to the formation of authentic Christian families that are distinguished by their visible experience of Gospel values. A Christian family, a true "domestic church", will also be a seedbed for abundant and holy vocations.

In its aim to promote collaboration between the Bishops and the Holy See, and in this way to build "affectus collegialis" (cf. *Ecclesia in America*, n. 33), CELAM will seek to strengthen the spirit of communion, of reciprocal charity and of the Church's inner life. This unity in charity must shine forth in this very exercise of the apostolate, among Pastors, between them and consecrated persons in the Religious life, and between the very persons who live their inner consecration of the charism proper to their community, all of which makes present the model of our Saviour, who came into the world not to be served but to serve.

With the firm wish that this anniversary strengthen ever more vigorously an evangelizing impulse in the Bishops and in all the particular Churches of Latin America, and that the Lord's grace continue to make fruitful your pastoral work, I entrust you to Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother of America, and I impart a heartfelt Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 14 May 2005

BENEDICT XVI

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