



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PRESIDENT
OF THE EPISCOPAL**

*To my venerable Brother in the Episcopate,
Bishop Franz Grave
President of Episcopal Action ADVENIAT*

1. Forty years ago the Plenary Assembly of the German Bishops' Conference decided to introduce, for the first time, during the liturgical services of Holy Christmas, a collection for the Church in Latin America. This decision of 30 August 1961 marks the beginning of the praiseworthy work of cooperation and solidarity between the Churches in Germany and the Churches in Latin American, which later took the name of Episcopal Action ADVENIAT. In the years of its existence it has contributed in an essential way to reinforcing and fostering the task of evangelization in Latin America.

2. I too want to be among those who thank God for the generosity with which German Catholics have satisfied the desire of my venerable Predecessor, Bl. John XXIII, and have sustained the Church in Latin America with their donations so that it might achieve ecclesial projects.

With special gratitude and appreciation I recall two Cardinals who have distinguished themselves: Joseph Frings, Archbishop of Cologne and Franz Hengsbach, Bishop of Essen, who can be considered the architects of this episcopal work. My appreciation also goes to the entire German Bishops' Conference which has successfully promoted and inspired this very important work. Likewise, I thank all the benefactors and the numerous, "ordinary" faithful who, year after year, have actively sustained with their own contributions their brothers and sisters in Latin America. The Lord, who also sees what is hidden, will abundantly reward you for your goodness (cf. Mt 6,2-4).

3. Today, after 40 years of fruitful collaboration in the Church, we can look with joy at this

abundant harvest, fruit of the great and inexhaustible love of German Catholics for their sister Churches in Latin America. It guarantees help in the formation of priests, religious and catechists as well as in the building of churches, chapels, seminaries, parish centres and convents. Cars, other vehicles and numerous other instruments useful for the work of evangelization and for pastoral needs are also made available.

In this way, German Catholics responded together with their Pastors to the major pastoral challenge of meeting material needs that weigh on the local Churches in Latin America, who are rich in faith, but often poor in religious infrastructures.

In a certain sense, German Catholics also participate in the particular solicitude that the Successor of Peter nourishes for his brothers and sisters in Latin America. They become increasingly aware of being members of the universal Church.

4. The concrete gestures of affection towards the sister Churches, economic help and other signs of solidarity express the mystery of the Church as *Communio*: all are members of one Body and Christ is the Head.

I wish to express my appreciation also for the twinning between German and Latin American Dioceses that has sprung up with the help of ADVENIAT and in the mutual exchange of giving and receiving that produced good and abundant fruits of solidarity.

Thanks to the untiring work of ADVENIAT a solid network has been created between the Church in Germany and the particular Churches in Latin America, whose Countries received the light of Christ more than 500 years ago and whose inhabitants are almost half of the Catholics world-wide.

The Gospel has deeply influenced the cultural identity of these regions. At the same time, a Church exists that is alive and eager to begin the work of evangelization (cf. *Address to participants in plenary assembly of Pontifical Commission for Latin America*, 23 March 2001; *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, 4 April 2001, p. 4).

5. The riches and vitality of the Church on the "continent of hope" must move German Catholics to live their faith with great intensity and conviction, as St Paul strongly urged the Church in Corinth referring to the Church of Jerusalem: "As a matter of equality your abundance at the present time should supply their want, so that their abundance may supply your want, that there may be equality" (II Cor 8,14).

My wish is that the close bond between your local Churches and those in Latin America may bear abundant fruits also in Germany, so that the Church renews and directs herself to that "high standard of ordinary Christian living", that I highlighted in my Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio ineunte* (cf. n. 31).

6. At the beginning of the third millennium I exhort the Pastors and the faithful of Germany to "profit from the grace received" in the Jubilee Year, "putting it into practice in resolutions and guidelines for action" (*ibid.*, n. 3) so that works as important as ADVENIAT can flourish and prosper for a world-wide ecclesial solidarity.

May the Lord, through the intercession of the Virgin of Guadalupe, patron and protector of America, fill your hearts with the gift of love and accompany your actions, done for your poorer brothers and sisters, united in faith! With this wish I impart my Apostolic Blessing.

From Castel Gandolfo 30 August 2001.

JOHN PAUL II