



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY
TO THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC,
MEXICO AND THE BAHAMAS

**MEETING WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF
THE CATHOLIC ORGANIZATIONS OF MEXICO**

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

Mexico City

Monday, 29 January 1979

Beloved Sons of the National Catholic Organizations of Mexico,

Blessed be the Lord who permits me also—in my stay in this beloved land of Our Lady of Guadalupe—to have the joy of a meeting with you.

I am grateful to you for your lively demonstrations of filial affection, and I can confess to you how much I would like to stop with each of you to get to know you personally, to know more about your ecclesial service, and to dwell on so many fundamental aspects of your apostolic project. In any case, I wish, these words to be an eloquent testimony of closeness, appreciation, stimulus and guidance of your best efforts as laity—and as organized Catholic laity—on the part of him who, as the successor of Peter, has been called to the service of all servants of the Lord.

You know very well how the Second Vatican Council took up this great contemporary historical movement of the "advancement of the laity", studying it in its theological foundations, integrating it and illuminating it completely in the ecclesiology of *Lumen Gentium*, convoking and giving impetus to the active participation of laity in the life and mission of the Church. In the Body of Christ constituted in "plurality of ministries but unity of mission" (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 2, cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 10, 32...), laity as Christian faithful "are by baptism made one body with Christ and are

established among the People of God. They are in their own way made sharers in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly functions of Christ". They are called to exercise their apostolate, in particular "in each and in all of the secular professions and occupations" which they carry out, and "in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life" (*Lumen Gentium*, 31), in order to "penetrate and perfect the temporal sphere with the spirit of the gospel" (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 5).

In the overall framework of the conciliar teachings and especially in the light of the "Constitution on the Church", vast requirements and renewed prospects of lay action were opened in very varied fields of ecclesial and secular life. Without disparaging the individual apostolate, which is recognized as its inescapable premise, the decree *Apostolicam Actuositatem* also pointed out the Church's appreciation of the associative forms of the lay apostolate, congenial to the Church's community nature and to the evangelization requirements of the modern world.

You are, then, signs and protagonists of this "advancement of the laity" which has yielded so much fruit for ecclesial life in these years of the implementation of the Council. I call upon you and, through you, upon all laity and lay associations of the Latin-American Church to renew a double dimension of your lay and ecclesial commitment. On the one hand, to bear witness to Christ effectively, to confess with joy and docility your full faithfulness to the ecclesial magisterium, to ensure your filial obedience and collaboration with your Pastors, to seek the most adequate organic and dynamic integration of your apostolate in the mission of the Church and, in particular, in the apostolate of your local Churches. The Mexican laity has given and gives many and tested examples of this. And it is with joy and gratitude that I wish to recall in particular the commemoration, in this year, 1979, of the fiftieth anniversary of Mexican Catholic Action; the backbone of the organized laity in the country.

The Third General Conference of the Latin-American Episcopate is a vital moment of grace which demands personal and community conversion in order to renew your ecclesial communion, your trust in your Pastors, your vigour and renewed apostolic effort.

On the other hand, from this ecclesial perspective, I wish to call you to renew your human and Christian awareness of the other side of your commitment: participation in the necessities, aspirations, and crucial challenges with which the reality of your neighbour calls for your evangelizing action as Christian laity.

Among the vast expanse of the fields that call for the presence of the laity in the world, and which are pointed out by the apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*—this magna charta of evangelization—I wish to mention some fundamental and urgent spaces in the accelerated and unequal process of industrialization, urbanization, and cultural transformation in the lives of your peoples.

The safeguarding, advancement, sanctification, and apostolic projection of family life must count

Catholic laity among their most decisive and consistent agents. The basic cell of the social tissue, which was considered by the Second Vatican Council as the "domestic Church", requires an evangelizing effort in order to expand its factors of human and Christian growth and overcome the obstacles that seek to harm its integrity and finality.

The emergent and complex "worlds" of intellectuals and university students, of the proletariat, technicians and executives, of the vast agricultural sectors and suburban populations subjected to the accelerated impact of economico-social and cultural changes, call for special apostolic attention, sometimes almost missionary, on the part of the Catholic laity in the pastoral projection of the Church as a whole.

How could we fail to mention also the presence, within this challenging multitude, of youth with its restless hopes, rebellions, and frustrations, its unlimited desires, sometimes utopian, its religious sensitivity and quests, as well as its temptations from consumer or ideological idols! The young expect clear, consistent, and joyful testimonies of ecclesial faith which will help them to restructure and canalize their own open and generous energies in solid options of personal and collective life. Let charity, the vital sap of ecclesial life, be manifested also by means of Christian laity in brotherly solidarity before the situations of indigence, oppression, helplessness or solitude of the poorest, the favourites of the liberating and redeeming Lord.

How could we forget the whole world of teaching, where the men of tomorrow are forged; even the field of politics, in order that it may always respond to criteria of the common good; the field of international organizations, in order that they may be schools of justice, hope and understanding among peoples; the world of medicine and of the health service where so many interventions are possible which very closely concern the moral order; the field of culture and art, fertile grounds to contribute to making man worthy on the human and on the spiritual plane?

In this twofold effort of renewed Christian commitment, your ecclesial faithfulness, gathering and strengthening the tradition of the Mexican laity, will set you going again with new energies to operate as a ferment, creating wider perspectives of social life.

The task is an immense one. You are called to take part in it, assuming and continuing the best of the experience of ecclesial and secular participation in recent years; gradually leaving aside crises of identity, sterile contestations, and ideologies extraneous to the Gospel.

One of the phenomena of recent years which has manifested with ever increasing vigour the dynamism of the laity in Latin America and elsewhere has been that of the so-called grass-roots communities (*comunautés de base*), which have arisen coincidentally with the crisis of the movement towards groupings among Catholics.

The grass-roots communities can be a valid instrument of formation and of religious life within a

new environment of Christian impulse, and they can be useful, among other things, for a widespread penetration of the Gospel in society.

But that this may be possible it is necessary that they bear well in mind the criteria so clearly expressed by the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (n. 58), so that they may be nourished by the word of God in prayer, and remain united, not separated, and still less in opposition to the Church, to the Pastors and to other ecclesial groups or associations.

As up to today, and increasingly better, may your associations form Christians with a vocation of holiness, staunch in their faith, certain in the doctrine proposed by the authentic Magisterium, firm and active in the Church, united in a deep spiritual life, nourished by frequent reception of the sacraments of Penance and of the Eucharist, persevering in testimony and evangelical action, consistent and effective in their temporal commitments, constant promoters of peace and justice against all violence and oppression, acute in critical discernment of situations and ideologies in the light of the social teachings of the Church, trusting in the hope of the Lord.

Let my Apostolic Blessing go to you, to all the laity of your associations, to your ecclesiastical assistants, and to the Mexican laity as a whole; and also to the millions of Latin-American laity who are raising their prayer and putting their hopes in Puebla. I entrust you all to the motherly protection of the Blessed Mary, in her title of Guadalupe

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