



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO RIO DE JANEIRO
ON THE OCCASION OF THE XXVIII WORLD YOUTH DAY

**HOLY MASS IN THE BASILICA OF THE SHRINE OF
OUR LADY OF THE CONCEPTION OF APARECIDA**

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

Wednesday, 24 July 2013

Video

*Your Eminence,
My Brother Bishops and Priests,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

What joy I feel as I come to the house of the Mother of every Brazilian, the Shrine of our Lady of Aparecida! The day after my election as Bishop of Rome, I visited the Basilica of Saint Mary Major in Rome, in order to entrust my ministry to Our Lady. Today I have come here to ask Mary our Mother for the success of World Youth Day and to place at her feet the life of the people of Latin America.

There is something that I would like to say first of all. Six years ago the Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean was held in this Shrine. Something beautiful took place here, which I witnessed at first hand. I saw how the Bishops – who were discussing the theme of encountering Christ, discipleship and mission – felt encouraged, supported and in some way inspired by the thousands of pilgrims who came here day after day to entrust their lives to Our Lady. That Conference was a great moment of Church. It can truly be said that the Aparecida Document was born of this interplay between the labours of the Bishops and the simple faith of the pilgrims, under Mary's maternal protection. When the Church looks for Jesus, she always knocks

at his Mother's door and asks: "Show us Jesus". It is from Mary that the Church learns true discipleship. That is why the Church always goes out on mission in the footsteps of Mary.

Today, looking forward to the World Youth Day which has brought me to Brazil, I too come to knock on the door of the house of Mary – who loved and raised Jesus – that she may help all of us, pastors of God's people, parents and educators, to pass on to our young people the values that can help them build a nation and a world which are more just, united and fraternal. For this reason I would like to speak of three simple attitudes: hopefulness, openness to being surprised by God, and living in joy.

1. *Hopefulness*. The second reading of the Mass presents a dramatic scene: a woman – an image of Mary and the Church – is being pursued by a Dragon – the devil – who wants to devour her child. But the scene is not one of death but of life, because God intervenes and saves the child (cf. Rev 12:13a, 15-16a). How many difficulties are present in the life of every individual, among our people, in our communities; yet as great as these may seem, God never allows us to be overwhelmed by them. In the face of those moments of discouragement we experience in life, in our efforts to evangelize or to embody our faith as parents within the family, I would like to say forcefully: Always know in your heart that God is by your side; he never abandons you! Let us never lose hope! Let us never allow it to die in our hearts! The "dragon", evil, is present in our history, but it does not have the upper hand. The one with the upper hand is God, and God is our hope! It is true that nowadays, to some extent, everyone, including our young people, feels attracted by the many idols which take the place of God and appear to offer hope: money, success, power, pleasure. Often a growing sense of loneliness and emptiness in the hearts of many people leads them to seek satisfaction in these ephemeral idols. Dear brothers and sisters, let us be lights of hope! Let us maintain a positive outlook on reality. Let us encourage the generosity which is typical of the young and help them to work actively in building a better world. Young people are a powerful engine for the Church and for society. They do not need material things alone; also and above all, they need to have held up to them those non-material values which are the spiritual heart of a people, the memory of a people. In this Shrine, which is part of the memory of Brazil, we can almost read those values: spirituality, generosity, solidarity, perseverance, fraternity, joy; they are values whose deepest root is in the Christian faith.

2. The second attitude: *openness to being surprised by God*. Anyone who is a man or a woman of hope – the great hope which faith gives us – knows that even in the midst of difficulties God acts and he surprises us. The history of this Shrine is a good example: three fishermen, after a day of catching no fish, found something unexpected in the waters of the Parnaíba River: an image of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception. Whoever would have thought that the site of a fruitless fishing expedition would become the place where all Brazilians can feel that they are children of one Mother? God always surprises us, like the new wine in the Gospel we have just heard. God always saves the best for us. But he asks us to let ourselves be surprised by his love, to accept his surprises. Let us trust God! Cut off from him, the wine of joy, the wine of hope, runs out. If we

draw near to him, if we stay with him, what seems to be cold water, difficulty, sin, is changed into the new wine of friendship with him.

3. The third attitude: *living in joy*. Dear friends, if we walk in hope, allowing ourselves to be surprised by the new wine which Jesus offers us, we have joy in our hearts and we cannot fail to be witnesses of this joy. Christians are joyful, they are never gloomy. God is at our side. We have a Mother who always intercedes for the life of her children, for us, as Queen Esther did in the first reading (cf *Est* 5:3). Jesus has shown us that the face of God is that of a loving Father. Sin and death have been defeated. Christians cannot be pessimists! They do not look like someone in constant mourning. If we are truly in love with Christ and if we sense how much he loves us, our heart will “light up” with a joy that spreads to everyone around us. As Benedict XVI said here, in this Shrine: “the disciple knows that without Christ, there is no light, no hope, no love, no future” (*Inaugural Address*, Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean, Aparecida, 13 May 2007, 3).

Dear friends, we have come to knock at the door of Mary’s house. She has opened it for us, she has let us in and she shows us her Son. Now she asks us to “do whatever he tells you” (*Jn* 2:5). Yes, Mother, we are committed to doing whatever Jesus tells us! And we will do it with hope, trusting in God’s surprises and full of joy. Amen.

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Act of Consecration to Our Lady of Aparecida

M*ary Most Holy by the merits of Our Lord Jesus Christ, in your beloved image of Aparecida, spread infinite favours over all Brazil.*

I, unworthy to be counted among your sons and daughters but full of desire to share in the blessings of your mercy, lie prostrate at your feet. To you I consecrate my intentions, that they may ever dwell on the love that you merit; to you I consecrate my tongue that it may ever praise you and spread your devotion; to you I consecrate my heart, that, after God, I may love you above all things.

Receive me, incomparable Queen, you whom Christ Crucified gave to us as Mother, and count me among your blessed sons and daughters; take me under your protection; come to my aid in all my needs, both spiritual and temporal, and above all at the hour of my death.

Bless me, heavenly helper, and through your powerful intercession, give me strength in my weakness, so that, by serving you faithfully in this life, I may praise you, love you and give you thanks in heaven, for all eternity. Let it be!

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