



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO THE PRESIDENT OF PANAMA
ON THE OCCASION OF THE SEVENTH SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS**

*To H.E. Mr Juan Carlos Varela Rodríguez,
President of Panama*

As you host the seventh Summit of the Americas, I wish to extend my cordial greeting to you and, through you, to all the Heads of State and of Government, as well as to all the Delegations attending. At the same time, I would like to express my closeness and my encouragement that through sincere dialogue, mutual collaboration, which unites efforts and overcomes differences, may be achieved on the journey toward the common good. I ask God that, by sharing common values in national or regional spheres, commitments of cooperation may be reached that realistically address problems and transmit hope.

I support the theme chosen for this Summit: “Prosperity with Equity: the Challenge of Cooperation in the Americas”.

I am certain — as I expressed in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* — that inequity, the unjust distribution of wealth and resources, is a source of conflict and violence among peoples, for it presumes that the advancement of the few is built on the necessary sacrifice of others and that, in order to live with dignity, one must struggle against others (cf. nn. 52, 54). Well-being achieved in this way is unjust at its very root and attacks the dignity of the people. There are “basic necessities”, such as land, employment and a home, and “public services”, such as health, education, security, environment, from which no human being should be excluded.

This desire — which we all share — unfortunately is still far from being realized. Even now there continues to be unjust inequity, which offends people’s dignity. The great challenge of our world is the globalization of solidarity and fraternity in place of the globalization of discrimination and

indifference and, until an equitable distribution of wealth can be achieved, no solution will be found for the ills of our society (cf. *ibid.*, n. 202).

We cannot deny that many countries have experienced strong economic development in recent years, however it is likewise true that others remain prostrate in poverty. Moreover, in emerging economies, much of the population has not benefited from the general economic advancement, frequently to the point that there is a greater gap between the rich and the poor. The “trickle-down” theory (cf. *ibid.*, n. 54) has proven to be wrong: it is not enough for the poor to gather the crumbs that fall from the table of the rich. The need for direct action in favour of the most disadvantaged, attention to those such as the youngest members of a family, must be a priority for those who govern. The Church has always defended the advancement of individuals (cf. *Centesimus Annus*, n. 46), taking care of their needs and offering them the opportunity to develop.

I would also like to call attention to the problem of immigration. The immense disparity of opportunities among some countries and others means that many people are obliged to leave their land, their family, becoming easy prey to human trafficking and slave labour, with neither rights nor access to justice.... In some cases, the lack of cooperation between States means many people are left outside the law and without the chance to assert their rights, forcing them into a position between being taken advantage of by others or resignation to becoming victims of abuse. They are situations in which, in order to protect fundamental rights, it is not enough to apply the law, whereby rules without compassion and mercy do not correspond to justice.

At times even within each country, scandalous and offensive differences are created, especially as regards the indigenous populations, in rural areas or on the outskirts of large cities. Without providing these people with an authentic defence against racism, xenophobia and intolerance, a constitutional State would lose its legitimacy.

Mr President, the efforts to build bridges, communication channels, relationships, to seek understanding, are never in vain. Panama’s geographic position in the centre of the American continent making it the meeting point between north and south, between the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, is surely a call, *pro mundi beneficio*, to generate a new order of peace and justice and to promote solidarity and cooperation while respecting the just autonomy of each nation.

With the hope that the Church may also be an instrument of peace and reconciliation among peoples, please accept my most cordial and heartfelt greeting.

From the Vatican, 10 April 2015.

FRANCIS

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