



The Holy See

VIDEO MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER FRANCIS

FOR THE FEAST OF OUR LADY OF APARECIDA IN THE MARIAN YEAR OF THE JUBILEE OF 300 YEARS FROM THE DISCOVERY OF THE IMAGE OF THE VIRGIN MARY APARECIDA

Dear Brazilian people

Dear devotees of Our Lady of Aparecida, patroness of Brazil

My greeting and my special blessing to all of you who are living in Christ Jesus the Marian Year of the Jubilee of 300 Years from the discovery of the image of the Virgin Mary Aparecida in the waters of the River Paraíba do Sul.

In 2013, on the occasion of my first international apostolic trip, I had the joy and the grace of visiting the shrine of Aparecida and of praying at the feet of Our Lady, entrusting my papacy to her and remembering the Brazilian people with their warm welcome that comes from her embrace and her generous heart. On that occasion I also expressed my desire to be with you in this jubilee year, but the life of a Pope is not simple. Therefore, I chose to appoint Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re as papal delegate for the celebrations to be held on 12 October. I entrusted to him the mission of ensuring in this way the presence of the Pope in your midst.

Although not present physically, I wish in the meantime, through the Aparecida Communication Network, to express my affection for this beloved people, devoted to the Mother of Jesus. What I leave here are simple words, but I hope for them to be received as a fraternal embrace in this moment of celebration.

In Aparecida – I repeat the words I pronounced in 2013 at the altar of the Nation Shrine – we learn to conserve hope, to let ourselves be surprised by God and to live in joy. Hope, dear Brazilian people, is the virtue that must permeate the hearts of those who believe, especially when around us the situations of desperation seem to want to discourage us. Do not let yourselves be defeated by dejection, do not let yourselves be defeated by dejection! Trust in God, trust in the intercession of Our Mother Aparecida. In the shrine of Aparecida and in every heart devoted to Mary we can

touch the hope that is made concrete in the experience of spirituality, generosity, solidarity, perseverance, fraternity, joy, all values which, in turn, find their deepest roots in the Christian faith.

In 1717, at the very moment in which there emerged from the water by the hand of those fishermen, the Virgin Mary Aparecida inspired them to trust in God, who always surprises us. Fish in abundance, grace diffused in a concrete way in the life of those who were fearful before constituted powers. God surprised them, because He Who created us in infinite Love, always surprises us. God always surprises us!

In this Jubilee, in which we celebrate the 300 years since this surprise from God, we are invited to be joyful and grateful. "Rejoice in the Lord, always" (*Phil 4: 4*). And may this joy, which emanates from your hearts, overflow and reach every corner of Brazil, especially the geographic, social and existential peripheries, which greatly yearn for a drop of hope. May the simple smile of Mary, which we can make out in her image, inspire the smile of each one of you when faced with the difficulties of life. The Christian can never be pessimistic!

Finally, I thank the Brazilian people for the prayers they say for me every day, especially during the celebrations of the Holy Mass. Pray for the Pope and be sure that the Pope always prays for you. Together, near or far, we form the Church, People of God. Every time we collaborate, even if in a simple and discreet way, in the announcement of the Gospel, we become, like Mary, authentic disciples and missionaries. And today Brazil is in need of men and women who, filled with hope and steadfast in faith, are witnesses to the fact that love, expressed in solidarity and sharing, is stronger and more luminous than the darkness of selfishness and corruption.

With great nostalgia for Brazil, I offer you my Apostolic Blessing, asking that Our Lady Aparecida intercede for all of us.

So be it.

Francis