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Apostolic Trip of the Holy Father Francis in Colombia (6-11 September 2017) – Holy Mass and Beatification in Villavicencio

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Holy Father's words at the end of the Holy Mass in Villavicencio

Holy Father's words to military staff and police at the CALAM airport, Bogotá

Holy Mass and Beatification in Villavicencio

This morning, after leaving the apostolic nunciature, the Holy Father Francis transferred by car to the CALAM Military Airport of Bogotá. Upon arrival he greeted and blessed a group of over four hundred people including soldiers and military staff, police agents and military chaplains, accompanied by the military Ordinary of Colombia, H.E. Msgr. Fabio Suescún Mutis. He then boarded an Avancia A321 destined for Villavicencio.

Upon arrival at the "Luis Gómez Niño-Apiay" air base of Villavicencio, Pope Francis was welcomed by the archbishop of the city and president of the Episcopal Conference of Colombia, H.E. Msgr. Óscar Urbina Ortega. Also present were the Governor, the Mayor, who presented the Keys to the City, and commanders of the army, the police and the Apiay air base. In the meantime, folk songs and dances were performed in the presence of several hundred faithful and families resident in the base.

The Holy Father travelled by car to the Catama terrain and, after touring among the faithful by popemobile, he reached the sacristy accompanied by a group of inhabitants of the region of the Eastern Llanos. Then, at 10.15, liturgical memorial of the *Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, he presided at the Holy Mass for the Beatification of the Servants of God Jesús Emilio Jaramillo Monsalve, bishop of Arauca, and Pedro María Ramírez Ramos, diocesan priest. Many faithful were present from the regions of the Llanos and the indigenous villages, as well as victims of violence.

At the end of the Holy Mass, after greetings from the archbishop of Villavicencio, H.E. Msgr. Óscar Urbina Ortega, the Pope addressed some words of closeness to the populations affected by the earthquake in Mexico and hurricane Irma. After the final blessing, in the sacristy Pope Francis greeted a small delegation of victims of the disastrous flood that affected the city of Mocoa and offered their bishop an economic contribution. He then transferred by car to the Joropo Maloca Compound.

The following is the full text of the Pope's homily, his words at the end of the Holy Mass, and his off-the-cuff address to military personnel at the CALAM airport in Bogotá.

Homily of the Holy Father

“Your birth, O Virgin Mother of God, is the new dawn that proclaims joy to the whole world, for from you has been born the sun of justice, Christ our God” (cf. Antiphon for the *Benedictus*). The feast of the birth of Mary shines its light over us, just as the gentle light of dawn radiates above the vast Colombian plain, this beautiful landscape whose gateway is Villavicencio, and shines its light too upon the rich diversity of its indigenous peoples.

Mary is the first light who announces night's end, and above all, the impending day. Her birth helps us to understand the loving, tender, compassionate plan of love in which God reaches down and calls us to a wonderful covenant with Him, that nothing and no one will be able to break.

Mary knew how to transmit God's light, and she reflected the rays of that light in her home which she shared with Joseph and Jesus, reflecting it also in her people, her country and that home which is common to all mankind: creation.

In the Gospel, we have heard the genealogy of Jesus (*Mt* 1:1-17), which is not a “simple list of names”, but rather a “living history”, the history of the people that God journeyed with; by making himself one of us, God wanted to announce that the history of the just and of sinners runs through his blood, that our salvation is not a sterile entity found in a laboratory, but rather something concrete, a salvation of life that moves forward. This long list tells us that we are a small part of a vast history, and it helps us not to claim excessive importance for ourselves; it helps us elude the temptation of over-spiritualizing things; it helps us not withdraw from the concrete historical realities in which we live. It also integrates in our history of salvation those pages which are the darkest and saddest, moments of desolation and abandonment comparable to exile.

The mention of women – though none of those referred to in the genealogy has the category of the great women of the Old Testament – allows us a particular rapprochement: it is they, in the genealogy, who tell us that pagan blood runs through the veins of Jesus, and who recall the stories of scorn and subjugation. In communities where we are still weighed down with patriarchal and chauvinistic customs, it is good to note that the Gospel begins by highlighting women who were influential and made history.

And within all this we see Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Mary with her generous *yes* permitted God to take charge of that history. Joseph, the just man, did not allow his pride, passions or zeal to expel him from that light. The narration lets us know, before Joseph is even aware, what has happened to Mary. His decision, made before the angel helped him to understand what was happening around him, shows his human qualities. The nobility of Joseph's heart is such that what he learned from the law he made dependent on charity; and today, in this world where psychological, verbal and physical violence towards women is so evident, Joseph is presented as a figure of the respectful and sensitive man. Even though he does not understand the wider picture, he makes a decision favouring Mary's good name, her dignity and her life. In his hesitation as how best to act, God helped him by enlightening his judgment.

The people of Colombia are God's people; here too we can write genealogies full of stories, many of love and

light; others of disagreement, insults, even of death... How many of you can tell of exile and grief! How many women, in silence, have persevered alone, and how many good men have tried to put aside spite and resentment, hoping to bring together justice and kindness! How can we best allow the light in? What are the true paths of reconciliation? Like Mary, by saying *yes* to the whole of history, not just to a part of it. Like Joseph, by putting aside our passions and pride. Like Jesus Christ, by taking hold of that history, assuming it, embracing it. That is who you are, that is who Colombians are, that is where you find your identity. God can do all this if we say *yes* to truth, to goodness, to reconciliation, if we fill our history of sin, violence and rejection with the light of the Gospel.

Reconciliation is not a word that we should regard as abstract; if it were, then it would only bring sterility and greater distance. Reconciliation means opening a door to every person who has experienced the tragic reality of conflict. When victims overcome the understandable temptation to vengeance, when they overcome this understandable temptation, they become the most credible protagonists for the process of building peace. What is needed is for some to courageously take the first step in that direction, without waiting for others to do so. We need only one good person to have hope! And each of us can be that person! Don't forget: we need only one good person to have hope! This does not mean ignoring or hiding differences and conflicts. This is not to legitimize personal and structural injustices. Recourse to real reconciliation cannot merely serve to accommodate unjust situations. Instead, as Saint John Paul II taught: "[Reconciliation] is rather a meeting between brothers who are disposed to overcome the temptation to egoism and to renounce the attempts of pseudo-justice. It is the fruit of sentiments that are strong, noble and generous that lead to establishing a coexistence based on respect for each individual and on the values that are proper to each civil society" (*Letter to the Bishops of El Salvador*, 6 August 1982). Reconciliation, therefore, becomes substantive and is consolidated by the contribution of all; it enables us to build the future, and makes that hope grow. Every effort at peace without a sincere commitment to reconciliation is always destined to fail.

The Gospel text we have heard culminates in Jesus being called Emmanuel, which translated means: God-with-us. That is how the Gospel of Mathew both begins and ends: "I will be with you always, to the close of the age" (*Mt 28:20*). Jesus is the Emmanuel Who is born and the Emmanuel Who accompanies us daily, the God-with-us Who is born, and the God Who walks with us until the end of the world. This promise is fulfilled also in Colombia: Monsignor Jesús Emilio Jaramillo Monsalve, Bishop of Arauca, and the martyred priest of Armero, Pedro María Ramírez Ramos, are signs of this, the expression of a people who wish to rise up out of the swamp of violence and bitterness.

In these beautiful surroundings, it is up to us to say *yes* to a concrete reconciliation; may our *yes* also include the natural environment. It is not by chance that even on nature we have unleashed our desire to possess and to subjugate. One of your countrymen sings this in a beautiful way: "The trees are weeping, they are witnesses to so many years of violence. The sea is brown, a mixture of blood and earth" (Juanes, *Minas Piedras*). "The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life" (*Laudato Si'*, 2). We need to say *yes* with Mary, and sing with her "the wonders of the Lord", for He has promised this to our fathers, He helps all nations and peoples, He helps Colombia which today wishes to be reconciled; it is a promise made also to its descendants forever.

Holy Father's words at the end of the Holy Mass in Villavicencio

Thank you for the words that Msgr. Óscar Urbina Ortega, archbishop of Villavicencio has addressed to me on behalf of you all.

At this moment, I wish to express my spiritual closeness to all those who suffer the consequences of the earthquake that struck Mexico last night, causing deaths and enormous material damages. I assure my prayers for those who have lost their life and for their families.

In addition, I closely follow the development of Hurricane Irma, which is affecting the Caribbean area leaving

behind many victims and enormous material damages, and causing thousands of displaced persons. I carry them in my heart and I pray for them.

I ask you to join in with these intentions; and please, do not forget to pray for me.

Holy Father's words to military staff and police at the CALAM airport, Bogotá

Good morning!

I want to thank you for your presence here, and also to thank you for all that you have done, that you do and continue to do in these days, during my visit. Even more work! ... But above all I would like to thank you for what you have done for peace, putting your life at risk. And it is what Jesus did: He reconciled us with the Father, He put His life at risk and He gave it. This makes you even closer brothers of Jesus: risking [life] for peace, to obtain peace. My heartfelt thanks for all this. Thank you! I hope you will be able to see peace consolidated in this country, which deserves it.

And now, all together, I ask you to pray in silence for all the fallen and all the injured, some of whom are among us here. Let us pray a moment in silence, and afterwards a Hail Mary to the Virgin.

[Hail Mary and Apostolic Blessing]

And please, I ask you to pray for me, do not forget!
