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Apostolic Trip of the Holy Father Francis to Chile and Peru (15-22 January 2018) – Holy Mass and final greeting at the Campus Lobito of Iquique

Holy Mass and Fraternal Celebration for the integration of peoples at the Campus Lobito of Iquique

Greeting of the Holy Father at the end of the Eucharistic Celebration

Holy Mass and Fraternal Celebration for the integration of peoples at the Campus Lobito of Iquique

This morning the Holy Father Francis, after bidding farewell to the apostolic nunciature of Santiago, transferred by car to the “Grupo 8 de la FACH” Air Base where, at 8.05 local time (12.05 in Rome), he departed on board a LATAM A321 destined for Iquique, after individually greeting twenty members of the Organizing Committee.

Upon arrival at “Diego Aracena” International Airport of Iquique, the Pope was received by H.E. Msgr. Guillermo Patricio Vera Soto, bishop of the city; the President of the Region and the Mayor. A group of faithful, some children and a choir were also present. The Holy Father Francis then transferred by car to the Campus Lobito. After a tour by popemobile among the faithful, at 11.30 local time (15.30 in Rome), the Pope presided at the Holy Mass for the integration of peoples in honour of “Nuestra Señora del Carmen”, Mother and Queen of Chile. For the occasion, the statue of the “Virgen de la Tirana” was transported from the Shrine to the place where Mass was held.

The coronation of the image of the Virgen de la Tirana took place during the rite. Then, at the end of the Eucharistic Celebration, the bishop of Iquique, H.E. Msgr. Guillermo Patricio Vera Soto, addressed greetings to the Pope.

The following is the homily pronounced by the Pope after the proclamation of the Gospel:

Homily of the Holy Father

“Jesus did this, the first of His signs, in Cana of Galilee” (*Jn 2:11*).

These are the final words of the Gospel we just heard, which describes Jesus’ public appearance: at a party, no more or less. It could not be otherwise, since the Gospel is a constant invitation to joy. From the outset, the angel says to Mary: “Rejoice!” (*Lk 1:28*). Rejoice, he says to the shepherds; rejoice, he says to Elizabeth, an elderly and barren woman...; rejoice, Jesus says to the thief, for this day you will be with me in paradise (cf. *Lk 23:43*).

The Gospel message is a wellspring of joy: “I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete” (*Jn 15:11*). A joy that is contagious, passing from generation to generation, a joy that we have inherited. Because we are Christians.

How much you know about this, dear brothers and sisters of northern Chile! How much you know about living your faith and your lives in a festive spirit! I have come as a pilgrim to join you in celebrating this beautiful way of living the faith. Your patronal feasts, your religious dances – which at times even go on for a week – your music, your dress, all make this region a shrine of popular piety and spirituality. Because the party does not remain inside the Church, but you turn the whole town into a party. You know how to celebrate by singing and dancing God’s “fatherhood, providence, constant and loving presence”, and this engenders “interior attitudes rarely observed to the same degree in those who do not have this religious sense: namely, patience, the sign of the cross in daily life, detachment, openness to others, devotion”.^[1] The words of the prophet Isaiah come to life: “The wilderness shall become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field will be deemed a forest” (*Is 32:15*). This land, surrounded by the driest desert of the world, manages to put on party clothes.

In this festive atmosphere, the Gospel shows us how Mary acts to make that joy continue. She is attentive to everything going on around her; like a good mother, she doesn’t sit still. So she notices, amid in the party and the shared joy, that something is about to happen that might “water it down”. She approaches her Son and tells Him simply: “They have no wine” (*Jn 2:3*).

In the same way, Mary passes through our towns, our streets, our squares, our homes and our hospitals. Mary is the Virgin of la Tirana; the Virgin Ayquina in Calama; the Virgin of the Rocks in Arica. She notices all those problems that burden our hearts, then whispers into Jesus’ ear and says: Look, “they have no wine”.

Mary does not remain quiet. She goes up to the servants and says to them: “Do whatever He tells you” (*Jn 2:5*). Mary, a woman of few but very pointed words, also comes up to each of us and says simply: “Do whatever He tells you”. In this way, she elicits the first miracle of Jesus: to make His friends feel that they too are part of the miracle. Because Christ “came to this world not to perform a task by Himself, but with us” – He performs miracles with us – “with all of us, so as to be the head of a great body, of which we are the living, free and active cells”.^[2] This is how Jesus performs miracles: with us.

The miracle begins once the servants approach the jars with water for purification. So too, each of us can begin the miracle; what is more, each one of us is invited to be part of the miracle for others.

Brothers and sisters, Iquique is a land of dreams (for so its name means in the Aymara language). It is a land that has given shelter to men and women of different peoples and cultures who had to leave everything behind and set out. Setting out always with the hope of obtaining a better life, yet, as we know, always with their bags packed with fear and uncertainty about the future. Iquique is a region of immigrants, which reminds us of the greatness of men and women, entire families, who, in the face of adversity, refused to give up and set out in search of life. In search of life. They – especially those who had to leave their land for lack of life’s bare necessities – are an image of the Holy Family, which had to cross deserts to keep on living.

This land is a land of dreams, but let us work to ensure that it also continues to be a land of hospitality. A festive hospitality, for we know very well that there is no Christian joy when doors are closed; there is no Christian joy when others are made to feel unwanted, when there is no room for them in our midst (cf. *Lk 16:19-31*).

Like Mary at Cana, let us make an effort to be more attentive in our squares and towns, to notice those whose lives have been “watered down”, who have lost – or have been robbed of – reasons for celebrating; those whose hearts are saddened. And let us not be afraid to raise our voices and say: “They have no wine”. The cry of the people of God, the cry of the poor, is a kind of prayer; it opens our hearts and teaches us to be attentive. Let us be attentive, then, to all situations of injustice and to new forms of exploitation that risk making so many of our brothers and sisters miss the joy of the party. Let us be attentive to the lack of steady employment, which destroys lives and homes. Let us be attentive to those who profit from the irregular status of many migrants who don’t know the language or who don’t have their papers “in order”. Let us be attentive to the lack of shelter, land and employment experienced by so many families. And, like Mary, let us say: They have no wine, Lord.

Like the servants at the party, let us offer what we have, little as it may seem. Like them, let us not be afraid to “lend a hand”. May our solidarity in the commitment for justice be part of the dance or song that we can offer to our Lord. Let us also make the most of the opportunity to learn and make our own the values, the wisdom and the faith that migrants bring with them. Without being closed to those “jars” so full of wisdom and history brought by those who continue to come to these lands. Let us not deprive ourselves of all the good that they have to contribute.

And let us allow Jesus to complete the miracle by turning our communities and our hearts into living signs of His presence, which is joyful and festive because we have experienced that God is with us, because we have learned to make room for Him within our hearts. A contagious joy and festivity that lead us to exclude no one from the proclamation of this Good News, and to share all that belongs to our original culture, in order to enrich it also with what is truly ours, with our own traditions, with our ancestral wisdom, so that those who come may encounter wisdom and share their own. This is the celebration. This is the water transformed into wine. This is the miracle that Jesus performs.

May Mary, under her different titles in this blessed land of the north, continue to whisper in the ear of Jesus, her Son: “They have no wine”, and may her words continue to find a place in us: “Do whatever He tells you”.

[1] PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 48.

[2] SAINT ALBERTO HURTADO, *Meditación Semana Santa para jóvenes* (1946).

Greeting of the Holy Father at the end of the Eucharistic Celebration

At the end of the Eucharistic Celebration, the Holy Father Francis addressed some words of greeting to the faithful and pilgrims present.

After the final blessing and greeting to the President of the Republic, the Pope transferred by car to the “Casa de retiros” of the “Nuestra Señora de Lourdes” Shrine of the Oblate Fathers.

The following is the Holy Father’s greeting:

Greeting of the Holy Father

At the conclusion of this celebration, I thank Bishop Guillermo Vera Soto of Iquique for his gracious words on behalf of his brother bishops and all God’s people. This feels like a farewell.

I renew my gratitude to President Michelle Bachelet for her invitation to visit the country. In a special way, I thank everyone who helped make this visit possible: the civil authorities and all those whose professionalism enabled

us to enjoy this time of encounter.

I also thank the thousands of volunteers for their selfless and silent work. Over twenty thousand. Without their commitment and hard work the jars of water would have not been here for the Lord to perform the miracle of bringing us the wine of joy. Thanks too, to all those who in so many ways accompanied this pilgrimage, especially with their prayers. I know the sacrifices you have had to make in order to take part in our celebrations and gatherings. I appreciate this and I thank you from my heart. I also thank the members of the planning commission. All of you have worked hard, so many thanks.

I now continue my pilgrimage towards Peru, a country that is a friend and brother to this great nation of Chile, which we are called to cherish and uphold. It is a nation that finds its beauty in the many and varied faces of her people.

Dear brothers and sisters, at every Eucharist we pray: "Look, Lord, on the faith of Your Church, and graciously grant her peace and unity in accordance with Your will". What more can I ask for you at the end of my visit than to say to the Lord: Look at the faith of this people and grant them unity and peace!

Thank you, and I ask you, please, to remember to pray for me. I am grateful for the presence of so many pilgrims from the brother nations, Bolivia, Peru, and please don't be jealous, but especially Argentines, because Argentina is my homeland. Thank you to my Argentinean brothers and sisters who have accompanied me in Santiago, Temuco and here in Iquique. Many thanks.
