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BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIEGE  
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS

# **BOLLETTINO**

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 201120c

Friday 20.11.2020

## **Audience with the Community of the Pontifical Latin American College of Rome**

This morning the Holy Father Francis received in audience the Community of the Pontifical Latin American College of Rome.

The following is the Pope's address to those present:

### **Address of the Holy Father**

*Dear brothers and sisters,*

I greet all the community of the College. I thank Fr. Gilberto Freire, S.J., for the words he addressed to me on behalf of those present. In them he illustrates to me the difficulties, problems and challenges of the present time. Especially for you on this journey of remaining faithful to your vocation and seeking ways to serve better.

However much history has separated our peoples, it has not been able to destroy the roots that unite them. On this basis, the Pontifical Latin American College was born as a pledge to unite all our particular Churches and at the same time to open them up to the universal Church in and from Rome.

This experience of communion and openness is a call, because the example of *mestizaje* that has made America great, and that is lived out in the diverse community that you form, can in turn help to heal the world. The Gospel and its message came to our land by human means, not free from sin, as we all know, but grace overcame our weakness and its word spread to every corner of the continent. Peoples and cultures welcomed it in a rich diversity of forms which we can still contemplate today and which teaches us not to be afraid of diversity, indeed, to understand that there can be no Church without diversity of peoples. This miracle occurred because both those who arrived and those who welcomed them were able to open their hearts and did not close themselves off from what the other could offer, whether on a human, cultural or religious level. These mixed roots - I spoke to you about *mestizaje* last time - these mixed roots come from a heart capable of loving the other with a love that is fruitful, that is, willing to create something new that goes beyond and transcends it. And this

presupposes that we reject our own self-centredness. Today, not only in America, but throughout the world, the fraternal encounter between peoples is prevented by self-seeking nationalisms, wrapped up in themselves, that look only to themselves. We are asked to reject self-centredness and, starting from our own identity, to be able to spread the gift we have received. And this seed of the kingdom, have no doubt, will grow and give a hundredfold, not of all the same grains, but of an unsuspected variety and richness.

Today, there are Latin Americans scattered all over the world and many Christian communities have benefited from this fact. Churches in northern and central Europe, even in the East, have found new vitality. Many cities, from Madrid to Kobe, fervently celebrate the Christ of the Miracles, and the same can be said of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The rich cultural cross-fertilisation that made evangelisation possible is happening again today. The Latin peoples meet among themselves and with other peoples thanks to social mobility and communication services, and they too emerge from this encounter enriched.

In this time, in this field, you are called to sow the Word, generously, without prejudice, like God, who does not look at the hardness of the earth, nor at the presence of stones or thistles, who does not uproot the weeds, lest with them the good seed of the kingdom be torn up. And this is what your training and your ministry must be about, to open the door of your heart and the hearts of those who listen to you, to lend a hand and invite others to do so with you for the good of all, to heal this world of the great evil that afflicts it and which the pandemic has so cruelly highlighted. As you can see, these are three concrete lines of action that have two moments: personal and community, which inescapably complement each other.

Open the door of the heart and of hearts. Open our hearts to the Lord who never stops knocking on our door, to dwell in us. But open it also to our brother or sister, for do not forget that our relationship with God can easily be assessed by how we project ourselves towards our neighbour. When you open your heart to all without distinction, out of love for God, you create a space where God and neighbour can meet. Never stop showing this availability, this openness: never close the door to those who in the depths of their hearts wish to be able to enter and feel welcome. Think that it is the Lord who calls you in the garb of that poor man, to sit down together at his banquet. And I leave you with a question: where is the poor man in my life? Have I forgotten where I come from?

The second line of action is to lend a hand and invite others to do so. The Lord is calling us to the priestly vocation, he has sent you to this city of Rome to complete your formation, because he always has this project of love and service for each one of you. Pastors following the heart of God, pastors who devote themselves to the care of the faithful, who shepherd them, shepherds who are not afraid of the flock, who guide, who care, who always seek to advance their people, shepherds who have the courage to stand in front, amid and behind the flock. In front to lead at the right moment, in the midst of the sheep and their odour, and behind to take care of those that are left behind, and also to let the flock go alone at certain times, because the flock has the sense of smell to detect good pastures, and to lead from behind as well. Certainly, in the memory of each of you, there are countless initiatives, and I have no doubt that by working hard you can do a lot of good and help many people, but our mission would not be perfect if we limited ourselves to this. Our effort must also be a call, it must gather the flock, make them feel like people, also called to set out and commit themselves to anticipating the kingdom, already here on this earth. And this implies that they feel useful, responsible, necessary, that there is a space where they too can lend a hand. Fight against the culture of exclusion, and please do not provoke it with a clericalism that causes so much harm and is a disease, fight against social segregation, fight against distrust and prejudice on the grounds of race, culture or faith, so that the feeling of fraternity prevails over all differences.

And thirdly, curing the world of the great evil that afflicts it. The pandemic has confronted us with the great evil afflicting our society, stripped it bare, we can touch it with our own hands. Globalisation has overcome borders, but not minds and hearts. The virus is spreading unchecked, and we are unable to provide a concerted response to it. The world continues to close its doors, refusing dialogue and refusing cooperation, refusing to open itself up with sincerity to a common commitment to a good that reaches everyone indiscriminately, this is the spirit of the world, this is how it moves, this is how it works. The cure for this evil must come from below, from the hearts and souls that one day will be entrusted to you, and must come with concrete proposals in the field of education, catechesis, social commitment, with proposals that are capable of changing mentalities and opening up spaces, to cure this evil and give God a united people. I repeat this figure, globalisation yes, but not in the form of a

sphere – a sphere is uniformity. Globalisation yes, but in the form of a polyhedron, in which each people, each one, preserves its own particularity.

And I ask the Virgin Mother, the Virgin of Guadalupe, patroness of Latin America, to support your hope in this course that now begins in the midst of human uncertainties, so that you may follow God's call, where the Lord calls you

And I ask the Virgin Mother, the Virgin of Guadalupe, Patroness of Latin America, to sustain your hope in this course that now opens in the midst of human uncertainties, so that you may follow God's call wherever the Lord calls you, wherever He sends you, and that you may be witnesses of the human fraternity that springs from the one source, being children of God. May the Lord bless you and may the Virgin protect you. And please do not forget to pray for me. Thank you.

From *L'Osservatore Romano*, Year CLX, no. 270, 21/11/2020

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