SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE
BOLLETTINO

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BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

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Homily of the Substitute for General Affairs of the Secretariat of State during Mass in the Basilica of Suyapa in Honduras

The following is the homily pronounced by Archbishop Edgar Peña Parra, Substitute for General Affairs of the Secretariat of State, during the Eucharistic celebration held in the Basilica of Suyapa in Honduras yesterday, 13 July 2024:

Homily of Archbishop Edgar Peña Parra

Dear brothers in the episcopate,

Dear Apostolic Nuncio,

Dear Msgr. Giacomo, secretary of the Apostolic Nunciature in Honduras,

Dear priests, deacons, seminarians, men and women religious,

Distinguished civil authorities and members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Brothers and sisters all in the Lord,

Today, full of gratitude, I return to this house, which was my home, with a task that fills my heart with joy: to convey the warm greeting that His Holiness Pope Francis addresses to you as Father and Pastor. Last Tuesday, when I stopped by to greet him and I informed him of this visit, he strongly requested that I convey to the Honduran people his affection and constant remembrance in prayer, and ask you all, please, to pray for him before Our Lady of Suyapa.

After the four years of my service in the Apostolic Nunciature, the last time I had the opportunity to come as a

pilgrim to the beautiful Basilica of Our Lady of Suyapa was in the year 2011. Ever since the first time, I felt welcomed by the maternal presence of Our Lady in this, her home, and also embraced by your affection, dear Honduran brothers and sisters, who since the very beginning have made me feel at home. Now, after more than a decade, full of emotion, moved and grateful, I return to this country that I consider my home and, in particular, this sacred place, to entrust to the loving intercession of Saint Mary, Mother of God, the Church, the Holy Father and his minister as universal pastor, as well as myself and the beloved Honduran people.

As we have just heard in the Gospel, after the annunciation of the Angel, “Mary arose and went with haste” (*Lk* 1:39); she does not stay still, paralyzed or dumbfounded by the meaning of the message she has received, but immediately sets out on a journey. Mary’s journey is also the journey of the Church. Mary, just like the Church, without ceasing her journey, knows how to pause. Therefore this Shrine of Suyapa – which occupies a special place in the heart of all the wonderful people of this country – like all the Marian shrines scattered throughout the world – is like an intermediate stop on the way, a curve in the path of life, where Mary awaits us all to comfort our weary and aching hearts, and to alleviate the sufferings that are never lacking in the harsh journey of existence.

In His infinite love, God provided that every Marian shrine be a corner where the Virgin, attentive and watchful, welcomes her children and reminds them that she continues to accompany them on their pilgrimage toward the heavenly homeland. Therefore, Mary’s journey is also the journey of the Church. Mary is the mother who walks with the Church, who is in turn a mother, our mother. For this reason, all of us, Pastors and faithful, sons and daughters of the Church, are in this shrine of Suyapa to venerate and honour Mary, our Mother and Mother of God, patroness and protectress of the beloved Honduran people; and we beg her to show us the way, which is her Son Jesus Christ, praying to her with the beautiful and ancient invocation “*iter para tutum*”, that she might protect our journey, make it safe and help us not to go astray on paths of darkness and shadows of death.

Mary, through the mystery of the Annunciation and the Visitation, is the example that we are all invited to follow. She, who first welcomed Jesus into her existence and then shared everything she had received, is the model of every believer. Every time we receive Jesus in Holy Communion, He is embodied in our life and urges us to welcome Him and to honour Him in the flesh of the poorest and most abandoned.

Dear brothers and sisters, in this time, sadly marked by the horror of war, by the mistreatment of our common home, by the scandalous and arrogant poverty that afflicts so many of our neighbours, let us implore the intercession of Our Lady of Suyapa so that, like her, we too may welcome in our heart He who is the Word, and bear witness to the entire world that only Jesus Christ is the living centre that can give meaning to life, and the wellspring to sustain true brotherhood founded on justice, peace and reconciliation.

Today, having reached the end of my visit to the beloved Honduran people, I wish to reiterate to you the Holy Father’s best wishes, and to encourage you untiringly to implore the Patroness of Honduras, so that she may protect the Church, the Pope, this nation and the entire world. And so that, with loving maternal solicitude, she may continue to care for and protect the mission God has entrusted to each one of us, and that we may strive to be witnesses of the Father’s merciful love – the source from which joy is always born and reborn -, builders of fraternity and the Lord’s co-workers in the edification of a civilization founded on love. So be it.