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Letter of the Holy Father to the pilgrim People of God in Nicaragua

What brings such joy? The Conception of Mary!

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ of the beloved Church in Nicaragua,

For some time I have wanted to write you a pastoral letter to reiterate once again the affection I profess for the Nicaraguan people, who have always distinguished themselves by their extraordinary love for God, whom you so affectionately call *Papachú*. I am with you, especially in these days when you are celebrating the Novena of the Immaculate Conception.

Do not forget the loving Providence of the Lord, who accompanies us and is the only sure guide. Precisely in the most difficult moments, when it becomes humanly impossible to understand what God wants from us, we are called not to doubt His care and mercy. The filial trust you have in Him and also your fidelity to the Church are the two great beacons that illuminate your existence.

Be certain that faith and hope work miracles. Let us look to the Immaculate Virgin: she is the luminous witness of this confidence. You have always experienced her maternal protection in all your needs and have shown your gratitude with a very beautiful and spiritually rich religiosity. One of these forms of dedication and consecration that manifests the joy of being her favourite children is the sweet expression: *What brings such joy? The Conception of Mary!*

I hope that this celebration of the Immaculate Conception, which prepares us for the opening of the Jubilee 2025, will give you the encouragement you need in times of difficulty, uncertainty and hardship. On this feast, do not forget to abandon yourself to Jesus' arms, with the invocation *Dios primero*, "God first", which you often repeat.

I wish to convey to you my closeness and the assurance that I unceasingly pray to the Blessed Virgin to console and accompany you, confirming you in your faith. I want to say it forcefully, the Mother of God does not cease to intercede for you, and we do not cease to ask Jesus to keep you always in His hand.

Walking together, supported by our tender devotion to Mary, makes us tenaciously follow the path of the Gospel and leads us to renew our trust in God. I am thinking in particular of the Rosary prayer in which we meditate each day on the mysteries of the life of Jesus and Mary. How often we include in the mysteries of the Rosary also our own lives, with their moments of joy, sorrow, light and glory. Reciting the Rosary, these mysteries go through the intimacy of our heart, where the freedom of the daughters and sons of God is sheltered, which no one can take away from us. How many graces we receive from the Rosary; it is a powerful prayer.

I entrust you to the protection of the Immaculate Conception. You have chosen her as the Mother of your people. This is expressed in that simple and deeply confident cry: *Mary of Nicaragua, Nicaragua of Mary*. May it be so!

Dear Nicaraguan brothers and sisters, to conclude, let us pray together the prayer I wrote for the Jubilee, asking the Lord to give us peace and all the graces we need:

Father in heaven, may the faith you have given us in your Son Jesus Christ, our brother, and the flame of charity infused in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, awaken in us the blessed hope of the coming of your Kingdom.

May your grace transform us into dedicated cultivators of the seeds of the Gospel that will ferment humanity and the cosmos, in confident expectation of the new heavens and the new earth, when, having overcome the forces of evil, your glory will be revealed forever.

May the grace of the Jubilee rekindle in us, Pilgrims of Hope, the longing for heavenly goods and spread throughout the world the joy and peace of our Redeemer.

To you, God eternally blessed, be praise and glory forever and ever. Amen.

Fraternally,

FRANCIS

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 2 December 2024
