



## Pope's Address to Brazilian Leaders

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Here is the text of Pope Francis' Address to Brazilian Leaders this morning in the Municipal Theater of Rio de Janeiro. The symphony orchestra and chorus have begun the ceremony with beautiful musical selections culminating in the singing of the Rio World Youth Day Hymn as Pope Francis appeared on stage.

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Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank God for the opportunity to meet such a distinguished representation of the political, diplomatic, cultural and religious, academic and business leaders of this immense country of Brazil.

I would like to speak to you in your own beautiful Portuguese language, but in order to express more clearly what I carry in my heart, I prefer to speak in Spanish. Please forgive me!

I greet all of you most heartily and I express to you my gratitude. I thank Archbishop Orani and Mr Walmyr Junior for their kind words of welcome and introduction. In you I see both memory and hope: the memory of your country's history and identity, and the hope that, in constant openness to the light radiating from the Gospel of Jesus Christ, it will continue to develop in full respect for the ethical principles grounded in the transcendent dignity of the person.

In every nation, those in positions of responsibility are called to face the future, as the Brazilian thinker Alceu Amoroso Lima once said, with the calm gaze of one who knows how to see the truth. [Il nostro tempo, in: *La vita soprannaturale e il mondo moderno* (Rio de Janeiro, 1956), p. 106.] I would like to consider three aspects of this calm, serene and wise gaze: first, the distinctiveness of your cultural tradition; second, joint responsibility for building the future; and third, constructive dialogue in facing the present moment.

1. It is important, first, to esteem the dynamic and distinctive character of Brazilian culture, with its extraordinary ability to integrate a variety of elements. The common feeling of a people, the foundations of its thought and creativity, the basic principles of its life, the criteria with which it assesses priorities and ways of acting, all rest on an integral vision of the human person.

This vision of man and of life so typical of the Brazilian people has been greatly nourished by the Gospel through the Catholic Church: above all, by faith in Jesus Christ, in the love of God and brotherhood with our neighbour. But the richness of this nourishment must be fully appreciated! It can render fruitful a cultural process that is true to Brazilian identity and capable of building a better future for all. This was the message of our beloved Pope Benedict XVI in his inaugural address at the Fifth General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate, in Aparecida.

To promote an integral humanism and the culture of encounter and relationship: this is the Christian way of promoting the common good, the joy of living. Here, faith and reason unite, the religious dimension and the various aspects of human culture art, science, labour, literature... Christianity combines transcendence and incarnation; it brings ever new vitality to thought and life, in contrast to the dissatisfaction and disillusionment which creep into hearts and spread in the streets.

2. A second element which I would like to mention is responsibility for society. This calls for a certain kind of cultural, and hence political, paradigm. We are the ones responsible for training new generations knowledgeable in economic and political affairs, and solidly grounded in ethical values. The future demands of us a humanistic vision of the economy and a politics capable of ensuring greater and more effective participation on the part of all, eliminating forms of elitism and eradicating poverty. This is the road that we are called to travel: to see that basic needs are met and that human dignity, brotherhood and solidarity are guaranteed on every level. In the days of prophet Amos, Gods stern warning was already being heard: They sell the righteous for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals they ... trample down the head of the poor into the dust of the earth and push the afflicted out of the way (Am 2:6-7). The outcry, the call for justice, continues to be heard even today.

Anyone exercising a role of leadership needs to have very practical goals and to seek specific means to attain them. At the same time, there is always the risk of disappointment, resentment and indifference, if our plans and goals do not materialize. The dynamic virtue of hope inspires us to keep pressing on, to employ all our energies and abilities on behalf of those for whom we work, accepting results, making it possible to strike out on new paths, being generous even without apparent results, yet keeping hope alive.

Leadership also means making the most just decision after having considered all the options from the standpoint of personal responsibility and concern for the common good. This is the way to go to the heart of the evils of a society and to overcome them, also with the boldness of courageous and free actions. In exercising our responsibility, with all its limitations, it is important to embrace all of reality, observing, pondering, evaluating, in order to make decisions in the present but with an eye to the future, reflecting on the consequences of our decisions. To act responsibly is to see ones own actions in the light of other peoples rights and Gods judgement. To preserve this ethical sense appears today as an unprecedented historic challenge. Beyond scientific and technical competence, the present situation also demands a sense of moral obligation expressed in a social and deeply fraternal exercise of responsibility.

3. To fill out the gaze which I have proposed, in addition to an integral humanism which respects cultural distinctiveness and fraternal responsibility, I now conclude by pointing to something which I consider essential for facing the present moment: constructive dialogue. Between selfish indifference and violent protest there is always another possible option: that of dialogue. Dialogue between generations, dialogue with the people, the capacity to give and receive, while remaining open to the truth. A country grows when constructive dialogue occurs between its many rich cultural components: popular culture, university culture, youth culture, artistic and technological culture, economic culture, family culture and media culture. It is impossible to imagine a future for society without a significant contribution of moral energies within a democratic order which will always be tempted to remain caught up in the interplay of vested interests. A basic contribution in this regard is made by the great religious traditions, which play a fruitful role as a leaven of society and a life-giving force for democracy. Peaceful coexistence between different religions is favoured by the laicity of the state, which, without appropriating any one confessional stance, respects and esteems the presence of the religious factor in society, while fostering its concrete expressions.

When leaders in various fields ask me for advice, my response is always the same: dialogue, dialogue, dialogue. It is the only way for individuals, families and societies to grow, the only way for the life of peoples to progress, along with the culture of encounter, a culture in which all have something good to give and all can receive something good in return. Others always have something to give me, if we know how to approach them in a spirit of openness and without prejudice. Only in this way can understanding grow between cultures and religions, mutual esteem without needless preconceptions, respectful of the

rights of everyone. Today, either we stand together with the culture of encounter, or we all fall; taking the right road makes the journey fruitful and secure.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank you for your attention. Please accept these words as an expression of my concern as Pastor of the Church and my love for the Brazilian people. Fraternal relations between people, and cooperation in building a more just society these are not some vague utopia, but the fruit of a concerted effort on the part of all, in service of the common good. I encourage you in your commitment to the common good, a commitment which demands of everyone wisdom, prudence and generosity. I entrust you to our Heavenly Father, asking him, through the intercession of Our Lady of Aparecida, to pour out his gifts on each of you, on your families and on your communities and workplaces. To all I cordially impart my blessing.

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