

Pope in Mexico: East bloc revolution is not enough

by Peter Rush

Hard on the heels of the overthrow of communism in Eastern Europe, one of the chief architects of that overthrow, Pope John Paul II, has set the process into motion for the political and economic liberation of another country, Mexico, with his visit there on May 6-13. The Pope brought to Mexico, now suffering its eighth year of a crushing austerity that has lowered living standards by more than half, a message not only of hope, but of inspiration to the common citizen to finally stand up and fight for the changes required to restart growth, eliminate poverty, and restore human dignity.

Central to his intervention in Mexico was a denunciation of free-market capitalism, and an affirmation of a third way of development, one that upholds the principle that man, and the development of man's creative powers in the image of the Creator, must be the pivot of national and continent-wide policy. To the disenfranchised masses of Mexico, he reaffirmed the positive cultural and religious identity that unifies all Mexicans, and unifies Mexicans with their brothers in the rest of Ibero-America. He emphasized the primacy of the family, and the importance of the individual and of human dignity, values under severe attack in Mexico and throughout the continent by the Anglo-American financial elites. His message of cultural optimism amid a sea of misery laid the groundwork for a revolution throughout the "Continent of Hope" no less momentous than that sweeping Eastern Europe.

From the moment his plane touched down at Benito Juárez Airport outside Mexico City, the Polish Pope was mobbed by Mexicans desperate for a first-hand look at him. Several millions lined his route into Mexico City, and by the time he had left the country, 20 million Mexicans, one-fourth of the population, had seen or heard him in person. The welcome—so stunningly warm that even the Pope, who is not unaccustomed to large and exuberant crowds, was deeply moved—was the spontaneous, eloquent statement of an oppressed people that they have had enough, and want a change. Although Mexican President Carlos Salinas de Gortari welcomed John Paul II at the airport and tried to appear pleased at his



The Pope receives an exuberant welcome in Mexico, setting the stage for a cultural transformation as revolutionary as that which is taking place in Eastern Europe.

visit, Salinas, who created the very misery the Pope decried, was dealt a political blow which will topple him from power as surely as Eastern Europe's communist leaders.

John Paul II also upset Salinas's top-priority project to dismantle national sovereignty by setting up a "free trade zone" with the United States and a "North American Common Market." This trade pact will wreck both economies by turning Mexico into a haven for U.S. runaway shops using cheap Mexican labor and exporting to goods back to the United States. Directly locking horns with Salinas, the Pope stated repeatedly that Mexico must unite with the rest of Ibero-America and realize the old dream of continental integration. He reaffirmed what every Mexican feels, namely—a historic, cultural, linguistic, and religious link to the nations to the south, and justified fear and distrust of U.S. intentions.

The Pope's intervention reinforced the eight-year effort led by economist Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., the most respected U.S. leader in Mexico, to bring about the kind of economic integration the Pope called for, based on an Ibero-American common market and joint debt moratorium against the domination of the multinational banks. LaRouche's proposal, which has circulated widely among leaders of most Ibero-American nations since it was written in 1982, was titled *Operation Juárez*; eight years of regression, collapse, and crisis suffered by almost every country in the region demonstrates the dolorous consequences of governments' refusal to adopt LaRouche's proposals.

Pope criticizes free-market capitalism

Although he never used the term, the Pope was clearly calling for a third way that is neither communism nor free-market capitalism. As he stressed repeatedly, no system that ignores the social effect of its own measures, that imposes austerity on the masses while the rich get richer, that can create and tolerate the extremes of poverty and human degradation now seen throughout much of Ibero-America, can receive the blessing of the Church, or of Christians.

"I believe that the Pope can use his visit to Mexico to attack the disasters that the capitalist system has left behind in the countries of the South, and to exalt the social role of the Church," Italian journalist Giancarlo Zizola told Mexico's *Proceso* magazine in an interview that appeared the day after the Pope arrived. When asked whether the Pope would attack capitalism with the same vehemence that he has just finished attacking communism during his recent trip to Czechoslovakia, Zizola answered, "I hope so." Zizola, described as one of Italy's top Vatican experts, said that the Pope now considers as a priority to attack "the practical atheism of the West, and the anthropological, economic, and social devastation directly provoked by the capitalist model."

During his eight-day tour, John Paul II confirmed Zizola's estimate. Speaking to over 2,000 Mexican businessmen in Durango on May 9, he said that the momentous events in Eastern Europe have been "superficially interpreted as the victory . . . of one system over another, as the triumph of liberal capitalism," but this view ignores "the effects which

liberal capitalism has had, at least until now, in the so-called Third World countries." He said that these effects included the abject poverty which has been imposed on millions in Mexico and elsewhere in the name of ideologies and false utopias, while the rich merely got richer.

Mexican situation called 'intolerable'

"The situation of Mexico is absolutely intolerable for a man like Karol Wojtyla," journalist Zizola told *Proceso*. The Pope "can no longer abide that in a Catholic country, where Christians play a determining role, a political and social policy of laicism, not to mention anti-clericalism, is maintained." Since the Mexican Revolution of 1914-20, which shares with the Bolshevik Revolution much more than just its date, the Mexican state has been fiercely hostile to the Church. To this day, the Church is all but outlawed, priests are forced by law into the status of an underclass, and religious education is banned.

Taking aim at Mexico's Constitution, which, among other anti-clerical articles, bans Christian education, the Pope said in Chihuahua on May 9 that the family is the "primary and vital cell of society," and that parents have the right "to freely educate their children, in accordance with their own convictions, and to be able to rely on schools in which such education is imparted." This and other interventions during his trip on the issue of Church-state relations hit like a bombshell in Mexico, which was already in the midst of a national debate on the question.

He also criticized the Salinas government. "In the specific case of Mexico, it should be recognized that, despite the vast resources the Creator has endowed on this country, it is still very far from the ideal of justice." He specified that while Mexico's rich are as rich as the rich in the advanced countries, there are large majorities "deprived of the most basic resources," and he hit the "growing decline in purchasing power." President Salinas, as budget minister in the last administration, and now as President, *boasts* of his key role in shaping those economic policies.

John Paul II also criticized the crushing foreign debt of Ibero-America and belittled the so-called "Brady Plan" debt renegotiation deal that only reduced Mexico's annual interest burden on its foreign debt by about 15%. Speaking to the foreign diplomatic community in Mexico City on May 8, he said that the debt "has become a brake, even accentuating underdevelopment in certain areas." He said that this clearly demonstrates that "technical measures" for solving it are insufficient.

'The truth will set you free'

The Pope didn't limit himself to criticisms, but sought to inspire the Mexicans to action to radically change their situation. On May 8, speaking to over 2 million youth at San Juan de los Lagos, near Guadalajara, he called on Mexican youth to understand their role in building a better future.

"Christ . . . places in you a demanding responsibility, as the builders of a new civilization, the civilization of solidarity and love among men," he said. He appealed to them not to fall victim to drugs, hedonism, or "the irrational arrogance of violence," but rather to "help your friends escape from the prison of indifference and desperation," and to "revive in other youth the hope of life."

Even as he scored the business community for failing to be concerned about the general welfare, he called on them to "reproduce this divine design and collaborate with the Creator in the transformation of the world, according to God's plan," and also to pay a "just wage."

Everywhere he went, he held up a mirror so that people, and above all the nation's leaders, would see the magnitude of the poverty gripping millions of Mexicans. The day after arriving, on May 7, the Pope chose the Mexico City suburb of Chalco, in the heart of what is known locally as the "circle of misery," a band of desperately poor districts ringing the capital, to deliver a major address on poverty. He attacked "leaders, bosses, chiefs, ideologues, opinion-makers, and creators of schools of thought" who have "guided people toward artificial paradises," but who, "when the hour of truth comes in the inexorable march of history," have "shown themselves to be false shepherds, servants not of truth and of the good, but of private interests, of ideologies and systems which turn against man." The description certainly fit Mexico's President Salinas, who has reduced Mexico to penury in order to uphold the ideology of the "free-market" liberalism attacked by the Pope on May 9.

In his homily, John Paul II evoked the image of the suffering Christ and likened it to "the faces of children victims of poverty . . . faces of youths disoriented by not finding their place in society . . . faces of the underemployed and unemployed, fired by the harsh demands of economic crises; faces of urban homeless and slum-dwellers . . . faces of helpless and forgotten elderly."

In one of his last addresses, to an assembly of Mexican intellectuals and artists, he delved deeply into the issue of culture, and the intellectuals' responsibility for uplifting the spirit of the nation. Referring to the recent liberation of Eastern Europe, he said that the present period is one in which "you, as men of culture, must offer proof of your lucidity and your penetrating spirit. You are called upon to give life to a new era in the New Continent as well, which poses a challenge to your intellectual labors." He said that there is "an absence of valid cultural projects capable of responding to the profound aspirations of the human heart," and that in Latin America there is "the need to forge new pathways based on your own identity, and this directly calls upon your responsibility for thought and for culture."

Concluding, he quoted Christ's advice to St. John: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth will set you free." "May you be promoters of messengers of a culture of life that makes Mexico a great nation," he said.

Pope's message of hope and social justice

We reproduce here excerpts from some of the most important speeches by Pope John Paul II during his historic visit in Mexico May 6-13. The references in parentheses refer, in most cases, to papal encyclicals.

No to Marxism and 'liberal capitalism'

From a speech to businessmen in the city of Durango on May 9:

Beloved Mexican businessmen:

In my apostolic travels I have always had great interest in meeting with the men and women of the business world. These meetings are for me an opportunity for a more direct and open communication of the spirit which inspires papal teachings on social matters, while they provide you an opportunity to show the understanding and warmth you reserve for the Church's social doctrine.

In truth, you hold a position of key importance in society's configuration. Your decisions have a multiplier effect and special repercussions upon the social and economic fabric. That is why the hope I place in you is so great.

From this beloved city of Durango, we also feel united to those Mexican businessmen who have been unable to come to this gathering as they might have wished. What's more, our glance extends to all those responsible for Latin America's economic activities. Current circumstances, after the recent developments at the end of last year, demand a broadening of the framework for these considerations to embrace, although with a diversity of nuances, all the countries of Latin America. The guiding principle of our reflections will be the figure of the businessman and the role he is called upon to play in the current circumstances of your continent.

Beyond any technical consideration of the matter, we must contemplate human activity in light of the collaboration with God that every man is called upon to lend (*Laborem Exercens*, 25). Also, today's world—Mexico as well as all of Latin America—should reproduce this divine design and collaborate with the Creator in the transformation of the world, according to God's plan. . . .

Events in recent history to which I have referred have been at times superficially interpreted as the victory or defeat

of one system over another—definitely, as the triumph of liberal capitalism. Specific interests have wanted to take that analysis to the extreme of presenting the apparently victorious system as the only path for our world, based on the setbacks that real socialism has suffered, and avoiding the necessary critical view of the effects which liberal capitalism has had, at least until now, in the so-called Third World countries.

It is wrong to say—as some have—that the social doctrine of the Church condemns only one economic theory. The truth is that, out of respect for science's precise autonomy, the Church offers judgment on the effects of its historic application, when the dignity of the individual is violated or endangered in some way. In the exercise of its prophetic mission, the Church wishes to encourage critical reflection upon social processes, always taking as its viewpoint overcoming situations not fully in line with the goals outlined by the Lord of Creation. The Church would do ill to remain at the mere level of simple social criticism. It thus falls to those of its members who are experts in the various fields of learning, to continue the search for valid and lasting solutions that can orient human processes toward the ideals proposed by the Scriptures.

In the specific case of Mexico, it should be recognized that, despite the vast resources the Creator has endowed on this country, it is still very far from the ideal of justice. Alongside great riches and lifestyles comparable to—and sometimes surpassing—those of the most prosperous countries, there are large majorities deprived of the most basic resources. In recent years we have seen the growing decline in purchasing power, while phenomenon typical of economic organization, such as inflation, have produced painful effects at all levels. It is appropriate to repeat once more: the weakest are always the ones to suffer the worst consequences, finding themselves enclosed in a circle of growing poverty. And why not say, as the Bible does, that the misery of the weakest cries out to God? (Exodus 22: 22ff.)

The Church, through its social teaching, has offered humanity sufficient principles that must be put into practice for a just economy. The teachings have fulfilled their mission, and it now falls to you, the experts, also members of the Church, to make a serious effort to find real, courageous, and practical solutions. . . .

The country, ladies and gentlemen, needs the collaboration of each and every one of you. Each according to his specialty, is called upon to humbly and generously accept the challenge posed by today's injustices, to dedicate the best of his experience and professional training to the service of a great, just, and fraternal fatherland, above any partisan or class egoism.

Labor and economic activity constitute one of the most important and burning issues in Latin America. And so it is appropriate to deeply and seriously pose that issue to yourselves; not fixating on the purely technical aspects, but taking

a much broader outlook, relating to people. Latin America must move forward through the work of its men and women, thanks to a current of real and efficient solidarity.

Great have been the efforts undertaken on this continent to make it free and worthy of man. Don't let that generosity of the past be wasted; misery generates slavery; misery itself is a lack of freedom. Progressive impoverishment compromises the dignity and stability of man. Therefore, the future of Latin America's freedom and dignity requires waging a unique battle from this moment on: not with weapons, but through creativity and the work of its people, and in this moral obligation you hold a prominent place. . . .

Fortunately, there has been a growing awareness that human labor cannot be viewed from the merely commercial standpoint as "merchandise" to be bought and sold (cf. *Laborem Exercens*, 7). There is something inseparable from labor and which is of the utmost importance: the dignity of the individual (*Ibid.*, 9). At the same time, don't forget that the only legitimate title to ownership of the means of production is that which serves labor (*Ibid.*, 14). Therefore, one of your major responsibilities must be the creation of jobs. Closely related to this is the question of a just wage. As I have written in the encyclical *Laborem Exercens*: "There does not exist in the current context a better means of achieving justice in labor-management relations than that presented by the remuneration of labor. . ." (n. 19).

It is useful to remember that progress in society should be oriented to the common good of all citizens, that is, avoiding the temptation to turn the national community into a reality at the service of an enterprise's particular interests. It is not unusual to discover that specific campaigns against birth rates or which promote the culture of consumption originate in economic interests of the business or financial world. Unfortunately, there are multiple examples of this. . . .

Within this same framework, one must also point to the economic solidarity so necessary in Latin America. There exist undeniable problems common to the entire continent, which can be faced in common (*Sollicitudo rei socialis*, 45). Isolation of the respective economies does not favor any of the interested countries. It is therefore necessary to go beyond the national perspective in economic projections, to give life to a continental economic project capable of presenting itself as the valid interlocutor on the international and world scene. Your broadness of view detects this demand, and there have not been and are not any lack of effort in this direction. God grant that determination and a sense of responsibility succeed in crowning those efforts. . . .

Call for a renaissance of great culture

From a speech to intellectuals in Mexico City on May 12:

At the end of an intense trip, now at the end of my pastoral visit to this beloved country, I am deeply pleased by this encounter, so full of meaning for me, with the representatives of the world of Mexican culture, science, and the arts. . . .

This is my first encounter with Latin American intellectuals after the important developments which took place in Eastern Europe in 1989. We were witness to a change that affects all of contemporary society. We are dealing, in effect, with a new and more complex era in which the inertia of the past and the intuitions of the future inevitably coexist. Yet it is precisely under such circumstances that you, as men of culture, must offer proof of your lucidity and your penetrating spirit. You are called upon to give life to a new era in the New Continent as well, which poses a challenge to your intellectual labors. . . .

One cannot forget, in this analysis of the varied panorama that Latin America offers, the important role played by the Catholic Church. In setting into motion the new evangelization, the Church continues to tirelessly proclaim Christian principles as the fundamental element of all civilization and all culture in accordance with human dignity, given that in evangelizing and to the extent that it evangelizes, that is, announces the Gospel of the grace of God, it can humanize, "civilize," liberate, build society. I wish to reflect on all this in my encounter with you.

The transformations which have been and are taking place in the so-called East bloc countries represent, as you well know, a change of scenery in the international community, which inevitably affects all other peoples. . . .

However, we cannot fail to note that there are many uncertainties about which road to follow. Some not insignificant obstacles are truly being overcome but, at the same time, we discover the absence of valid cultural projects capable of responding to the profound aspirations of the human heart.

At the root of these considerations we can see some well-tested truths. On the one hand, the most evident is that the system based on Marxist materialism has let itself down. Those who propose it and those who based their hopes on those efforts have been warned.

However—and this too is proven—neither can the already well-established cultural models of the most industrialized countries totally assure a civilization worthy of man (*Sollicitudo rei socialis*, 28). Immediate and contingent values are often exalted as fundamental keys to social coexistence, while a grounding on those deeper truths, those principles that give meaning to one's existence, is renounced. It is enough to think about the lost meaning of human life, so evident in the rising number of suicides characteristic of certain highly industrialized countries, and also so tragically exemplified by abortion and euthanasia. We see a process of erosion which, in affecting the roots, will unfailingly bring painful wounds to all of society.

Further, and considering the case of Latin America, those immediate and transitory values are incapable of sustaining the effort required to construct a promising civilization like yours, a society worthy of man in all its aspects: material and spiritual, immanent and transcendent.

Faced with this panorama of uncertainty regarding the crisis of cultural models, a series of questions comes to my mind, as expressed by the author of that anonymous document from pre-Hispanic Mexico: "What shall rule us? What shall guide us? What shall show us the way? Which shall our norm be? Which our measure? Which our model? From whence must we depart? What could become the torch and the light?" (*Madrilean Manuscript of the Royal Academy of History*, pp. 191v and 192r)

At the same time, one can see developing in Latin America the need to forge new pathways based on your own identity, and this directly calls upon your responsibility for thought and for culture. We cannot overlook that Mexico has been the cradle of civilizations which, in their time, reached a high level of development and left an inestimable legacy of culture and knowledge. You are called upon thus to cooperate intensely, to bring life to a project of cultural development that leads the people of Latin America to that fullness of civilization to which it should aspire.

In preparing for the new evangelization, the Catholic Church feels called upon to also offer an important contribution to this field. She is fully confident in your ability and in your skills. Because of her commitment to serve man in the fullness of life, it is in the Church's very nature to serve the zeal for truth, for good and for beauty present in every human heart. Perhaps I need not repeat it; in any case, let me remind you that the Church has always tried to favor culture, true science, as well as the art that ennobles man, or such technology as develops with deep respect for persons and for nature itself.

You are well aware of this attitude of the Church, since for several centuries Christianity has deeply penetrated Latin American culture, until it has formed a part of its very identity. Mexico, on the other hand, has figures whose work is the patrimony of all of humanity. I am thinking of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Juan Ruiz de Alarcón, and so many others. . . .

This unavoidable calling to serve man—every man and all men—is what moves the Church to address its call to Mexico's intellectuals—beginning with the Catholic intellectuals—so that, in opening new pathways of participation and creativity, no effort be spared in carrying out that labor of integration—a feature of true science—which sets the basis for a genuine integral humanism embodying the superior values of Mexican culture and history. . . .

Before concluding, I'd like to return to the initial perspective of these reflections: Latin America must reaffirm its identity and must do so from within itself, from its most genuine roots. The various difficulties it faces, of an economic, social and cultural order, should be resolved with the collaboration and efforts of its own peoples. In this noble undertaking, men and women of culture are called upon to inspire profound principles and to provide motivations that stimulate the moral and spiritual capacity of the individual, the only means of achieving changes which serve man, and

do not enslave him. . . . True culture tends always to unite, rather than divide. . . .

The Catholic Church in Latin America takes your contributions into serious consideration. . . .

To conclude, ladies and gentlemen, I wish to remind you of a phrase by Jesus in the Gospel according to St. John: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8: 32). . . . May you always be promoters and messengers of a culture of life that makes of Mexico a great nation, where antagonisms are overcome, where corruption and deceit find no quarter, where the noble ideal of solidarity among all Mexicans prevails over the outmoded urge for domination.

Debt and the need for continental unity

From a speech to the diplomatic corps in Mexico City on May 8:

. . . I would not want to conclude this gathering without mentioning another question which, inevitably, affects world stability: the phenomenon of the foreign debt. To this purpose, I want to remind you of the words of the encyclical . . . [*Sollicitudo rei socialis*]: the mechanism that was to have been used to assist the developing countries "has become a brake, even accentuating underdevelopment in certain cases" (*Ibid.*, 19). This clearly demonstrates that technical measures for solving the serious problems that threaten world stability are not enough. Without ignoring each country's different situation, I feel obliged to emphasize the urgency of diligently considering the ethical dimension this crisis entails. . . .

In the splendid setting which this gathering in Mexico City offers us, I consider it necessary to place special emphasis on the importance of the commitment to unity of the entire Latin American family. In effect, if the principles of reciprocity, solidarity and efficient collaboration prove totally necessary in dealing with the great issues that affect the international community (cf. speech to the accredited diplomatic corps at the Holy See, Jan. 12, 1985), that imperative is so much more important, if possible, in dealing with this continent, which is fraternally linked in so many ways. Common historic, cultural, and linguistic, not to mention religious, roots, at once favor and encourage the difficult undertaking of unification. I ask you not to be deterred by obstacles in your path, but to persevere in building that solidarity, *and have confidence in your people's ability to bring it to fruition*. I urge you to work tirelessly for the unity which will make you an unquestioned protagonist in the world arena. . . .

On labor, and the dignity of man

From a speech in Monterrey, Nuevo León on May 10:

Today I greet with particular affection the labor community, always so close to my heart and to my own experience as a worker. . . .

The visible world has been created for man. Thus Christ says to his listeners: Are you not worth much more than the

fowls of the air and the lilies of the field? (Matthew 6: 26-28)

Truly, we are more important in the eyes of God. What gives man his value and measure is his having been created in the image and likeness of God, which is reflected in his nature as a person, in his ability to know and love the good.

But precisely because of this, man cannot allow his spiritual being to be subjected to what is inferior in the hierarchy of creatures. He cannot make that which the earth and the temporal character of Creation offer him, the final purpose of his existence. He cannot debase himself to serving objects, as though they were the only goal and final purpose of his life.

On the contrary, man is called upon to seek God with all his might, even in his worldly labor. . . .

Among you, most beloved brothers and sisters, there are many who have secure jobs, which offer you great satisfaction and allow you to support your families with dignity. For all of this, thanks be to God. But how many suffer because they cannot properly feed, clothe, and educate their children? How many live in the confines of a humble room, lacking the most basic services, far from their jobs, which are sometimes poorly paid and uncertain, and cause them to look to the future with anguish and discouragement? How many children are forced to work at an early age? How many workers practice their trade in unhealthy conditions, not to mention the inadequacy of unions and legal safeguards to protect the rights of the worker against abuse and so many forms of manipulation? . . .

While not denying the good results achieved through the combined efforts of public and private initiative in countries where freedom reigns, we cannot, however, ignore the defects of an economic system whose main driving force are often profit and consumption, subordinating man to capital so that, by not taking his personal dignity into account, the worker is considered a mere part of an immense productive machine, where his labor is treated as a mere merchandise at the mercy of fluctuations in the law of supply and demand.

It is true that man's sin is always at the root of problems afflicting individuals and communities. This is why the Church tirelessly preaches the conversion of the heart, so that all may collaborate, in the spirit of solidarity, in the creation of a social order more in accordance with the demands of justice.

The Church cannot permit any ideology or political current to wrench from it the banner of justice, which is one of the Gospel's first demands and the core of its social doctrine. The Church must also make its presence felt in the world, with a word on the principles and values which inspire community life, peace, coexistence and genuine progress. For this very reason it must oppose all those forces which attempt to implant certain types of violence and hatred, as a dialectical solution to conflicts. Christians cannot forget that the noble fight for justice can by no means be confused with the pro-

gram which "sees in the class struggle the only means to eliminate class injustices, existing in society and within in the classes themselves. . ." (*Laborem Exercens*, 11).

A message to the poor of Mexico

*From a speech in Chalco Valley, Mexico City on May 7:
Dearest brothers and sisters:*

Coming to Chalco reflecting on the crowd of men and women, young people and children, who have gathered in the desire to hear the Word of God, Jesus's exclamation came to mind: *I feel compassion for the people because they have been following me three days and have nothing to eat. And I do not want to send them off fasting, since they could die on the road* (Matthew 15: 33). . . .

Toward the crowd following him, Jesus *felt compassion, since they were humiliated and disheartened like sheep without a shepherd* (Matthew 9: 36). Our Lord, unlike the people's false leaders who—like mercenaries—flee in the moment of the test, presented himself as the good and true Shepherd, because he was willing to give his life for his sheep. The supreme testimony and strongest proof that Christ is the Good Shepherd is that he gave his life for his sheep, which he did on the cross, in which he offered his very self in sacrifice for the sins of the world. This cross and this sacrifice are the sign which radically and clearly distinguishes the Good Shepherd from him who is not, from him who is merely a mercenary.

The cross and the sacrifice, dearest brothers, permit us to distinguish between the Good Shepherd and false mercenary shepherds. Throughout history not a few "shepherds"—leaders, bosses, chiefs, ideologues, opinion-makers, and creators of schools of thought—have tried to "shepherd" and guide people toward artificial paradises and toward promised lands of liberty, of well-being, of justice, of full realization, wanting to do without God. . . . But, when danger comes, when the hour of truth comes in the inexorable march of history—they have shown themselves to be false shepherds, servants not of the truth and of the good, but of private interests, of ideologies and systems which turn against man. . . .

At this moment in history, when we are witness to profound social transformations and a new configuration in many regions of the planet, it is necessary to proclaim that when entire peoples find themselves subjected to oppression by political ideologies and systems with an inhuman face, the Church, which is the continuation of Christ's work, the Good Shepherd, always raised its voice and acted in defense of man, of every man and of the whole man, especially of the weakest and most helpless. It defended the whole truth about man, since "man is the path of the Church," as I said at the beginning of my papacy. . . .

I see the face of suffering Christ; faces of children victims of poverty, abandoned children, without school, without a healthy family environment; faces of youths disoriented by not finding their place in society, frustrated by the lack of

training and employment opportunities; faces of the underemployed and unemployed, fired by the harsh demands of economic crises; faces of parents in anguish over not having the means to support and educate their children; faces of urban homeless and slum-dwellers, hit not only by their lack of material goods, but also by the degradation and contamination of the environment; faces of helpless and forgotten elderly. . . .

The poverty which oppresses the multitude of our brothers in the world and prevents their integral development as persons, is different. In the face of this poverty, which is want and privation, the Church raises its voice, convoking and giving rise to the solidarity of all to overcome it.

You, the inhabitants of the Chalco Valley, of a great part of this diocese of Netzahualcoyotl, and so many other individuals and families from the suburbs of Mexico City and the country's other cities, know the meaning of want and privation. . . .

Thus, I invite all of Mexico's Christians and men of good will to awake their unified social consciences; we cannot peacefully sleep while thousands of our brothers, close by us, lack what is most indispensable to living dignified human lives. . . .

The role of the family in God's plan

From a speech in Chihuahua on May 9:

Dear brothers and sisters:

It is a source of great pleasure for me to celebrate this liturgy of the Word with the families of Chihuahua's Christians. . . .

We wish to now reflect on the profound significance which the Christian family assumes in God's plan. We are driven once more by the concern which we all feel in our minds and hearts by today's world in which, the family is frequently attacked in a thousand different ways. . . .

The greatness and responsibility of the family is in being the first community of life and love, the first environment in which man can learn to love and feel loved not only by other people, but also, and above all, by God. For that reason, it is incumbent upon Christian parents to create and maintain a home in which the profound Christian identity of their children—that they are God's children—can take root and mature. . . .

Speaking today to the Catholic families of Chihuahua and Mexico, on this Mother's Day, I wish to pay homage to the mother, to the women of Mexico and of all Latin America. With reason it has been said that the woman has played a providential role in preserving the faith of this beloved continent. . . .

In a society so often marked by signs of death and indifference—such as violence, abortion, euthanasia, the abandonment of the handicapped, the poor, and useless—the woman is called upon to keep alive the flame of life, and respect for the mystery of all new life. . . .

God has wanted the gift of life to arise from that community of life which is marriage, and wants children to learn the character of that gift in the framework of familial love. Christian parents have the right and the duty to educate their children in this regard. It is logical that, even in this area, they receive the help of other people. But the Church also remembers the law which schools or any other entities must observe when they aid parents in sex education, such that it is in line with the spirit desired by the parents (*Familiaris consortio*, 37).

The family has received from God the mission of being "the primary and vital cell of society" (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 11). As a living fabric, society's health and power depend on the health and power of the families which form part of it. The defense and promotion of the family is also the defense and promotion of society itself. It should therefore be the most interested party in the development of a culture which has the family as its foundation.

There are many ways in which civil society can favor the institution of the family, strengthening its stability and protecting its rights. I would particularly like to refer to the parents' rights to freely educate their children, in accordance with their own convictions, and to be able to rely on schools in which such education is imparted.

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