

## Dateline Mexico by Marivilia Carrasco and Hugo López Ochoa

### Pope calls for Ibero-American unity

*In Mexico, the "land of martyrs" of Ibero-American Catholicism, millions respond to the Pontiff's call for hope.*

Pope John Paul II, who arrived in Mexico May 6 on a seven-day visit, severely criticized "the superficial analysis" of those who interpret events in Eastern Europe as the victory of liberal capitalism. Speaking to 1,500 businessmen from across Mexico, the Pope called on them to fulfill the social doctrine of the Church and undertake true "Latin American solidarity." Spoken to a nation which has been presented by the radical liberals of the International Monetary Fund as an example the whole Third World should follow, John Paul II's words shook all of Mexico.

The Pope defined the causes of the oppression of Mexico, which has suffered a decade of economic and moral oppression unprecedented in the country's history, in a meeting with accredited diplomats in Mexico City: "Another question that inevitably affects world stability [is] the phenomenon of the foreign debt . . . the mechanism that was to have served as an aid to the developing countries has instead become a brake, not to mention that in certain cases it has even accentuated underdevelopment. . . . I feel obliged to emphasize the urgency of diligently appraising the ethical dimension of these crises."

On May 6, in statements to Mexican President Carlos Salinas de Gortari, the Pope focused on the need for Ibero-American unity: "These days, we are experiencing moments crucial to the future of this beloved country and also of this continent," he said. He returned to this theme in addressing the diplomatic corps: "I believe it necessary to stress the importance of the unification of the entire Latin

American family. . . . The common historic, cultural, and linguistic roots, no less than the religious ones, both favor and impel the arduous task of unity.

"I ask that you not be led astray, but that you persevere in the construction of that solidarity, to have confidence in the capacity of your people to carry it out. I encourage you to work untiringly for the unity that will bring you an unquestionable place on the world stage." To Mexico's teachers he stated his conviction that "the Church looks with certain confidence upon Mexican culture, as it does with the other cultures of Latin America. Human and Christian are called upon to free the civilizing potential which has yet to full show itself."

In a May 8 challenge to 2 million Mexican youth, gathered in San Juan de los Lagos, Jalisco, the Pope demanded: "Look around you, and see much darkness, much pain and suffering among your Mexican brethren. . . . Faced with this panorama, can you remain indifferent?" Journalists reported that "an absolute, decisive, unrestrained *No!* filled the air from 2 million throats."

The population revealed its religious devotion in a beautiful process of spiritual ennoblement before a Pope, whom they see as the last hope to change their situation.

The renewal of hope, of the Catholic faith, of the solidarity and dignity of the Mexican people, was the main purpose of this second papal visit to Mexico—the first was 11 years ago. The Pope called San Juan de los Lagos "land of the martyrs," a reference to the fact that that city was the heart

of the resistance to efforts by gnostic President Plutarco Elias Calles to destroy the Mexican Catholic Church in the 1920s.

The Pope told his collaborators how impressed he was by the people's love. "It fills me with joy to learn that Mexicans represent one-fourth of the Latin American Church," he said upon his arrival. In the first four days of his seven-day visit, some 15 million Mexicans turned out to hear and see the Pope. Upon his arrival in Mexico City, people filled the streets amidst shouts of "John Paul II, the whole world loves you," and "Mexico is always faithful." A human barricade formed along the 16-kilometer route between the airport and the Basilica of Guadalupe where the first mass was celebrated.

were repeated everywhere he went, and nearly all of Mexico was glued to its radio and television sets to hear his words.

John Paul II chose Chalco, one of the poorest suburbs of Mexico City, to issue his first urgent call for implementing the Church's social doctrine. "In many of you I see the face of suffering Christ," he told them. "The words of the good shepherd fall upon this people, whose faces show the suffering features of Christ: *Misereor super turbam* (Matt. 15,33). I feel compassion for the multitude because they are abused and oppressed, like sheep without a shepherd (Cf. Matt. 9,36). . . . Today, as yesterday, the Church wants to be the voice of those who have no voice."

There is little doubt that the Pope's message will have profound impact upon all of Ibero-America. Prophetically, he warned in the city of Aguascalientes May 8: "The entire international community begins a new phase in its history, which will also have an impact here in the not so distant future."