

Diocese of the Most Blessed Incarnation

March 25, 2015

Dear faithful from Encarnación,

Cordial greetings to the President of the Republic, Mr. Horacio Cartes; to the Vice-President, Mr. Juan Eudes Afara; to the national authorities present; to the Governor of Itapúa, Mr. Luis Gneiting and the department authorities present; to the Quartermaster of Encarnación, Mr. Joel Maidana; to the President of the City Council, Mr. Alfredo Scheid Sauer and the civic authorities present; to the President of the 400th Anniversary Celebration Commission, Mr. René Arrúa and all the collaborators; to the Director of the Yacyreta Binational Corporation, Mr. Juan Schmalko and all who represent this Corporation; to the diplomats, ambassadors and consuls of brother/sister nations who accompany us; to the representatives of the civil and military Institutions who participate in this celebration.

A very special greeting to Bishop Ignacio Gogorza and to Bishop Claudio Silvero, my brothers in the episcopate, and to all my brother priests. A fraternal greeting to the brothers from the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church and to the Christian brothers from other Churches represented. A cordial welcome to all those invited to this beautiful celebration marking the 400th anniversary of the founding of our city of Encarnación.

The mystery of the Incarnation of the Word and the redeeming work of Christ throughout history

The Incarnation which we celebrate is more than 400 years old. The moment of the Annunciation marks the beginning of a new era in humanity's history. More than 2,000 years ago, we inaugurated the new time of Christ with the joy of the News, the election of the Most Blessed, her YES to the divine wish and the conception of the Word which becomes flesh, becomes human for us and for our salvation. In Jesus, born of the Virgin, the mystery of God made man, true God and true man, erupts in the history of humanity in need of redemption. The Redeemer assumes our humanity and leads within himself to the victory over death and sin in his passion, his death and his Resurrection.

Each era and each culture throughout the history of the Church continues to submerge itself into the mystery of Christ. Each Christian and each Christian community relives in its moment the challenge to open up to the grace, to the gratitude to the love of God in order to lead and to elevate to Christ our chosen nature, but at the same time wounded nature. In the joys and sorrows of our history, in the victories and the defeats of our struggles, Christ manifests himself with his grace and knits his presence in the memory of the Christian in order to lead him to the fullness of his Sanctity, as was done in the life of San Roque González of Santa Cruz. The Saints "embody" the testimony of Christ for each period of time and for each place. Roque gave himself so that others would have life, be free, and be happy in their dignity.

To Celebrate is to remember with gratitude

We celebrate the 400th anniversary of the founding of our city in 1615. We remember 4 centuries of history with gratitude, with joy which has been manifested in many moments of festivity which we have shared. We do not forget. The new joy is supported in grateful memory (EG 13). If we would make a careful analysis of the different tables of 400 years of memory, we would see the tensions which make a part of the human history, between the good and the bad, between light and darkness, because all human history which wants to be divine is confronted with the need of conversion and the full adherence to the Gospel. But there is always a main character, always present in these four centuries which continues emerging to sanctify its own in the joy of the children of God: Christ crosses all these tables of our historical memory and it is HE who wants to greet us today and tells us: Rejoice! Because I was, I am and I will always be with you, by your side. The history does not begin with us, it was always God's initiative, we follow HIM. (EG 12).

To Celebrate is to renew the grace and the surrender

This celebration is the moment to again hear the greeting of the Angel and the response of the Virgin Mary. "Rejoice, full of grace, the Lord is with you"....." Behold the handmaid of the Lord, may it be done to me according to your Word." The young Virgin was the place of the Incarnation. She, our Patroness, mother and protectress, is who today tells us how to celebrate the joy of being blessed. God greets us and invites us to not only look at yesterday with gratitude, but to place our feet in the present and our hands on the work which will occur in time. We celebrate the joyful greeting of God disposed to continue building a city more "incarnate" and thus more redeemed, a city which must be a cradle of saints because it was founded by a Saint. Encarnación has been mission territory, today it is called to be a land of missionaries who go everywhere and beyond. The response which God wants to hear is: Here we are, with you, because you took the initiative to choose us and to call us, because your Grace precedes us. Those from "Encarnación" are children of the Virgin if they respond like Her. Rejoice, youthful Encarnación!

To Celebrate is to renew the sending forth and the strength to build the Kingdom in the newest times

The celebration of these 400 years inaugurates a new era, a new time. We are living new times, we want to continue growing as Christians, as Church. The Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean tell us from Aparecida (11) that the Church is called to profoundly rethink and to launch anew with fidelity and audacity its mission in the new Latin American and world circumstances, that we are called to be disciples and missionaries for a New Evangelization. Pope Francis leads us with new airs and we hope that his visit to Paraguay, with profound desire, that he contaminates us with his youthful spirit.

In order for our joy to be complete, the Pope tells us that we do not want to only "preserve:" The message must be refreshed in the hearts of the faithful, the baptized who have fallen away must be brought nearer, we must go out to meet those who do not know Jesus Christ or who reject Him (EG 14-15). He also tells us that as Church we do not only want to "administer," but

to accompany the human changes, become involved, develop new activities, be a part of the common good.

The joy of the Gospel, of the Good News, is an invitation to embody a pastoral approach close to the men and women of today in new situations, being Christians who radiate by their way of living, free from fears and complaints, free from suspicions, free from inferiority complexes or superiority often disguised by rigid conventions. A close pastoral approach takes care of, heals, brings joy, supports, with testimonies of full lives, not with lives disjointed from the reality which Christ came to redeem.

The joy of the Gospel is incarnate in works and actions which support social action guided towards the common good which reaches those who are more separated, which seeks and does not expect with indifference, which seeks to share and to enrich while giving. The joy of the Gospel is not lived in isolation, but in Community, in the communion of those who are strong together and who favor the one who is far from the light, from tenderness, from home.

The joy of the Gospel is embodied in a new pedagogy which forms men and women who do not close themselves up in formalisms nor in rigid customs, but are open to the dynamism of charity stemming from personal conversion and from mercy. This joy is born from true conversion which acknowledges that only God is the One who makes us saints, this joy maintains itself in that living Christ who does not isolate himself and does not allow being closed up in strange ideas or ideologies which separate the Christian from Christ. This joy makes us strong without isolating us so that we can be ferment (yeast) everywhere.

To Celebrate is to renew the faith and the following of Christ, like Mary and like San Roque

Today we are joyful because God greets us and makes us remember the Good News that He loves us with preference as He loved the Blessed Virgin and as He loved San Roque. We are joyful because we can listen to God's greeting in many voices of our times, with changes and challenges, from credible witnesses of the Gospel like Pope Francis. We are joyful because today we are the responsible persons of a new era in the proclamation of the Gospel which wants to reach further and more profoundly than in other eras. We are joyful because we were chosen to participate and to be the community of new missionaries who embody the Gospel for the new generations.

Rejoice your Faith, Encarnación! Thus you will be called, Blessed! Happy are you because you have believed!

+ Francisco Javier Pistilli Scorzara

Bishop of Encarnación

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