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Apostolic Trip of the Holy Father Francis to Chile and Peru (15-22 January 2018) – Holy Mass in the Maquehue Aerodrome, Temuco

Holy Mass in the Maquehue Aerodrome, Temuco

Lunch with the inhabitants of Araucanía in the “Madre de la Santa Cruz” House in Temuco

This morning, after leaving the apostolic nunciature in Santiago, the Holy Father Francis transferred by car to the “Grupo 8 de la FACH” Air Base Airport from where, at 8.00 local time (12.00 in Rome), he departed for Temuco on board a LATAM A231, after greeting twenty people from the Organizing Committee.

Upon arrival at “La Araucanía” Airport in Temuco, the Pope was greeted by H.E. Msgr. Héctor Eduardo Vargas Bastidas, S.D.B., bishop of Temuco, by H.E. Msgr. Francisco Javier Stegmeier Schmidlin, bishop of Villarrica; by the president of the Region and the Mayors of Temuco, Padre de las Casas and Freire. A group of children was also present. He then transferred by car to the Maquehue Airport. After greeting the Commander of the Air Base, and following a tour among the faithful by popemobile, at 10.20 local time (14.20 in Rome), the Pope presided at the Eucharistic Celebration “for the progress of peoples”. It was attended also by faithful representing the original populations of Araucanía, who animated the Holy Mass with traditional music.

At the end of the celebration, the bishop of Temuco, H.E. Héctor Eduardo Vargas Bastidas, S.D.B., addressed a greeting to the Pope. After the final blessing, the Holy Father travelled by car to the “Madre de la Santa Cruz” House.

The following is the homily pronounced by the Pope after the proclamation of the Gospel:

Homily of the Holy Father

“Mari, Mari” [Good morning!]

“Küme tünngün ta niemün” [“Peace be with you!” (Lk 24:36)]

I thank God for allowing me to visit this beautiful part of our continent, the Araucanía. It is a land blessed by the Creator with immense and fertile green fields, with forests full of impressive araucarias – the fifth “praise” offered by Gabriela Mistral to this Chilean land[1] – and with its majestic snow-capped volcanoes, its lakes and rivers full of life. This landscape lifts us up to God, and it is easy to see His hand in every creature. Many generations of men and women have loved this land with fervent gratitude. Here I would like to pause and greet in a special way the members of the Mapuche people, as well as the other indigenous peoples who dwell in these southern lands: the Rapanui (from Easter Island), the Aymara, the Quechua and the Atacameños, and many others.

Seen through the eyes of tourists, this land will thrill us with its magnificent landscapes as we pass through it, but if we stop and put our ear to the ground, we will hear it sing: “Arauco has a sorrow that cannot be silenced, the injustices of centuries that everyone sees taking place”.[2]

In the context of thanksgiving for this land and its people, but also of sorrow and pain, we celebrate this Eucharist. We do so in this Maquehue aerodrome, which was the site of grave violations of human rights. We offer this Mass for all those who suffered and died, and for those who daily bear the burden of those many injustices. And in remembering, let us together remain a moment in silence before so many wrongs and injustices. The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross bears all the sin and pain of our peoples, in order to redeem it.

In the Gospel we have just heard, Jesus prays to the Father “that they may all be one” (*Jn 17:21*). At a crucial moment in His own life, He stops to plea for unity. In His heart, He knows that one of the greatest threats for His disciples and for all mankind will be division and confrontation, the oppression of some by others. How many tears would be spilled! Today we want to cling to this prayer of Jesus, to enter with Him into this garden of sorrows with those sorrows of our own, and to ask the Father, with Jesus, that we too may be one. May confrontation and division never gain the upper hand among us.

This unity implored by Jesus is a gift that must be persistently sought, for the good of our land and its children. We need to be on our watch against temptations that may arise to “poison the roots” of this gift that God wants to give us, and with which He invites us to play a genuine role in history. What are those temptations?

1. False synonyms

One of the main temptations we need to resist is that of confusing unity with uniformity. Jesus does not ask his Father that all may be equal, identical, for unity is not meant to neutralize or silence differences. Unity is not an idol or the result of forced integration; it is not a harmony bought at the price of leaving some people on the fringes. The richness of a land is born precisely from the desire of each of its parts to share its wisdom with others. Unity can never be a stifling uniformity imposed by the powerful, or a segregation that does not value the goodness of others. The unity sought and offered by Jesus acknowledges what each people and each culture are called to contribute to this land of blessings. Unity is a reconciled diversity, for it will not allow personal or community wrongs to be perpetrated in its name. We need the riches that each people has to offer, and we must abandon the notion that there are superior or inferior cultures. A beautiful “chamal” requires weavers who know the art of blending the different materials and colours, who spend time with each element and each stage of the work. That process can be imitated industrially, but everyone will recognize a machine-made garment. The art of unity requires true artisans who know how to harmonize differences in the “design” of towns, roads, squares and landscapes. Unity is not “desk art”, or paperwork; it is a craft demanding attention and understanding. That is the source of its beauty, but also of its resistance to the passage of time and to whatever storms may come its way.

The unity that our people need requires that we listen to one another, but even more importantly, that we esteem one another. “This is not just about being better informed about others, but rather about reaping what the Spirit has sown in them”.[3] This sets us on the path of solidarity as a means of weaving unity, a means of building history. The solidarity that makes us say: We need one another, *and* our differences so that this land can remain beautiful! It is the only weapon we have against the “deforestation” of hope. That is why we pray: Lord, make us artisans of unity.

Another temptation can come from considering the weapons of unity.

2. *The weapons of unity.*

If unity is to be built on esteem and solidarity, then we cannot accept any means of attaining it. There are two kinds of violence that, rather than encouraging the growth of unity and reconciliation, actually threaten them. First, we have to be on our guard against coming up with “elegant” agreements that will never be put into practice. Nice words, detailed plans – necessary as these are – but, when unimplemented, end up “erasing with the elbow, what was written by the hand”. This too is violence. Why? Because it frustrates hope.

In the second place, we have to insist that a culture of mutual esteem may not be based on acts of violence and destruction that end up taking human lives. You cannot assert yourself by destroying others, because this only leads to more violence and division. Violence begets violence, destruction increases fragmentation and separation. Violence eventually makes a most just cause into a lie. That is why we say “no to destructive violence” in either of its two forms.

Those two approaches are like the lava of a volcano that wipes out and burns everything in its path, leaving in its wake only barrenness and desolation. Let us seek, and never tire of seeking dialogue for the sake of unity.[4] That is why we cry out: Lord, make us artisans of your unity.

All of us, to a certain extent, are people of the earth (cf. *Gen 2:7*). All of us are called to “the good life” (Küme Mongen), as the ancestral wisdom of the Mapuche people reminds us. How far we have to go, and how much we still have to learn! Küme Mongen, a deep yearning that not only rises up from our hearts, but resounds like a loud cry, like a song, in all creation. Therefore, brothers and sisters, for the children of this earth, for the children of their children, let us say with Jesus to the Father: may we too be one; Lord, make us artisans of unity.

[1] GABRIELA MISTRAL, *Elogios de la tierra de Chile*.

[2] VIOLETA PARRA, *Arauco tiene una pena*.

[3] Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 246.

[4] *Message for the 2017 World Day of Peace*.

Lunch with the inhabitants of Araucanía in the “Madre de la Santa Cruz” House of Temuco

At 12.45 local time (16.45 Rome time), the Holy Father Francis lunched with the bishop of Temuco and with a representation of the inhabitants of Araucanía in the “Madre de la Santa Cruz” House. Before leaving the House, the Pope visited the Chapel of the Institute where he met with around forty Sisters of the House, some elderly priests and some Superiors of the religious congregations present in the diocese.

After the exchange of gifts, Pope Francis transferred by car to “La Araucanía” Airport in Temuco, from where he departed at 15.30 local time (19.30 in Rome) on board a LATAM A321 destined for ú. After arriving at the “Grupo 8 de la FACH” Air Base in Santiago, he transferred by car to the Shrine of Maipú for the meeting with young people.
