

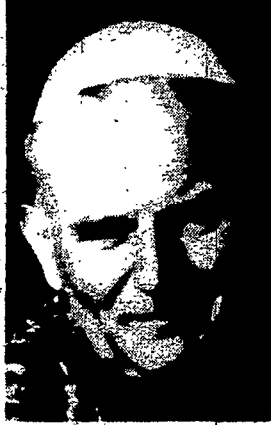
The Pope Speaks to Young People

On Feb. 7, Pope John Paul II spoke to the young people who attended the general audience on that day. Following is the text of that address.

Dear boys and girls!

Dear young people!

Here we are again in St. Peter's Basilica, for the usual weekly audience. Today, too, you have come in large numbers to meet the pope. Deeply appreciating this testimony of faith and filial respect, I thank you sincerely and greet you with affection.



Your youth, your liveliness, your joy are very bracing, and stimulate an increasingly intense commitment in service of your souls.

The first thought I wish to express to you today concerns, as is obvious, my recent journey to Latin America, which represents nearly half of the Catholic population on earth. I think you will have been able to follow it, at least partly, on television or in the newspapers.

My heart is full of unforgettable memories: this stupendous, though tiring journey was a real grace of the Lord, certainly obtained for me by my venerated predecessors, whose great name I bear: John XXIII, Paul VI and Pope John Paul I. They accompanied me on the long and consoling pilgrimage from Santo Domingo to Mexico City, from Guadalajara to Puebla, from Oaxaca to Monterey, in a joyful and pressing program of appointments and ceremonies.

It was a meeting with millions and millions of persons, who, urged by faith and love, gathered around the Vicar of Christ. It was, above all, a continuing

meditation. I was able to speak to bishops, priests, men and women religious, seminarians, workers, university students, school children, campesinos, indios, the sick, the underprivileged and children as well as to leaders of the nations and governments. I spoke in the stadiums, in the squares, in the streets, in the great sanctuaries, in the cathedrals, among the mountains of the indios, in the barrios of the poor, in hospitals. Everywhere the crowds flocked around the pope as they once flocked around Jesus.

And at this moment I would like to address a fatherly thought to all the young people and children, so ardent and happy, that I met. In particular, I am glad to remember the sick children of Mexico City and the little indios of Cuilapan.

The second thought concerns the assembly of the Latin American bishops, gathered in the city of Puebla.

I had the fortune to open this third assembly personally on Saturday, Jan. 27, when I presided over the concélébration in the sanctuary of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and then on Sunday, Jan. 28, when I delivered the opening address in the chapel of the major seminary at Puebla.

It is a question — as is known — of the third meeting of the bishops of Latin America: the first one took place at Rio de Janeiro in 1955; the second at Medellín in 1968.

There were present at Puebla 21 Cardinals, 66 archbishops, 130 bishops, 45 men and women religious, 33 men and women laity, four deacons, four campesinos, four indios, and five non-Catholic observers.

This assembly has as its subject of discussion a very important problem: "the evangelization in the present and the future of Latin America." Therefore I recommend it warmly to your fervent prayers.

I would like to conclude the information just given with a thought on "Episcopal Collegiality," of which the Second Vatican Council speaks at length in the constitution "Lumen Gentium."

You know that Jesus chose the 12 Apostles and conferred on them alone his powers for the accomplishment of their mission: to announce the Truth, to save and sanctify souls, to guide the Church.

He set Peter at the head of the 12, as the foundation of the Church and the universal pastor of all souls, with the task of "strengthening his brothers," having from the Lord special assistance in order not to err in the doctrine about faith and morality. The mission and the powers of the Apostles passed to the bishops; the mission and the powers passed to the pope, and, that is, to the Bishop of Rome, his successor.

You see how, in the will and plan of Jesus, the Church is one Body, perfectly united and linked together: the bishops form a unity, a "collegiality" with Peter, that is, with the pope as their head.

So by means of the bishops we ascend to the Apostles and from the Apostles we arrive at Jesus, and through Jesus, we reach the Holy Trinity.

In order to be sure that we really love Jesus, we must be united with our own Bishop. The constitution Lumen Gentium rightly affirms that the Lord Jesus Christ is present in the midst of believers in the person of the bishops, assisted by the priests.

Therefore, young people and children, love your bishop, who is a father, a friend and a teacher; pray for him and with him; listen to his words and carry out his initiatives; make his pastoral ministry beautiful and consoling. Let the meeting with the bishop always be a joy and a feast, because it is a meeting with Jesus!

With this wish I entrust you to the motherly love of Our Lady of Guadalupe and I willingly bless you.

Puebla Explored Roots of Liberation

Father Pelton, a Holy Cross Father, former chairman of the theology department at the University of Notre Dame, served for a number of years as theological adviser and vicar for religious to Cardinal Raul Silva Henriquez of Chile. Father Pelton is now director of Notre Dame's Continuing Clergy Education program and was present at Puebla for the 18-day CELAM assembly.

By FATHER ROBERT PELTON, CSC
RNS Correspondent

Puebla, Mexico — To compare Pope John Paul II with Alex Haley and the third Conference of Latin American Bishops (CELAM) with "Roots" might be stretching the art of analogy, but it does serve as a handy vehicle for a theological analysis of CELAM III.

The Pope asked the Latin American bishops meeting here at Puebla to dig deeply into the continent's past decade of theological ferment to make sure that its foundation rested on "a solid Christology," "a well-founded ecclesiology," and "liberation in its integral and profound meaning." Christ, the church and liberation were the three central posts on which CELAM III renewed the Catholic Church's "preferential option for the poor." The Pope asked that the posts be well planted.

The world press splashed the pontiff's refutation of those who would "re-read" the Gospels to depict Christ as a politician, revolutionary, or crypto-Marxist. But the reports gave less emphasis to the papal declaration in the same address that "Christ did not remain indifferent in the face of the vast and demanding imperative of social morality." And the pontiff added, "Nor could the church."

Pope John Paul did not condemn "liberation theology," as many reports put it, but he did ask

that this growth of theological speculation in Latin America be pruned and "not reduced to the simple and narrow political, economic or cultural dimension." The Pope warned that religious fervor can be manipulated for partisan political ends — a lesson that Ayatollah Khomeini may painfully learn.

In asking CELAM III to search out the evangelical roots of its present mission, the Pope stressed that Christ is the revealer of truth, and thus the basis of true liberation. He stressed that the church responds in faith to Christ and therefore any separation of church from the Kingdom of God, or separation of the institutional church from the popular, or grassroots, church does violence to basic Christianity.

The Pope also stressed Gospel roots when speaking of human rights. "It is not through opportunism, nor thirst for novelty that the church ... defends human rights. It is through evangelical commitment, which, as happened with Christ, is a commitment to the most needy." In other words, evangelization and human promotion, or liberation, go hand in hand — education for social awareness, prophetic denunciation of injustice, and pressure on social structures are part and parcel of the Gospel.

Many observers here characterized the Pope's opening address to CELAM as conservative. It was, in the best sense of conservation, preserving theological tradition.

Those same observers almost universally described CELAM III's final document as progressive. It was, in the true sense of progress, a realization that theology can suffer as much from senility as from mutilation.

The CELAM participants, some 200 bishops and 150 priests and laity, followed the papal guidelines but did not simply echo papal pronouncements. They shaped their own declaration with a distinct Latin accent. And theologians like Jon Sobrino of El Salvador and Leonard Boff of Brazil may have been shut out of the CELAM assembly, but their Latin

contributions to Christological understanding were heard at Puebla.

During the assembly, Archbishop Marcos McGrath of Panama criticized the draft text's ecclesiology not because it deviated from Christian tradition but because it failed to respond adequately to the Latin reality.

The Latinization of the Puebla document may perhaps best be seen in the sharp divergence between Pope and prelates on their vision of the past decade. "In these last 10 years, how much progress humanity has made," the Pope told the bishops. "From Medellín (1968) until now, the situation has become more grave for the majority of our people," the bishops noted in their statement.

But the 220-page Puebla document follows the lead of Pope John Paul, stressing biblical roots and present reality, spiritual values and human dignity, salvation and liberation.

On this foundation, the section on "preferential option for the poor" builds what may perhaps be the most distinctive Latin American contribution to modern theological development — theology as seen from the perspective of the poor.

As Gustavo Gutierrez, the renowned Peruvian architect of liberation theology, said in a Lima lecture, "By imitating Christ and locating himself with the poor, the Christian works out his salvation and learns principally, not about the poor, but about the nature of God himself."

The Puebla document stressed that preferential attention for the poor is rooted in the Gospel. The CELAM statement also quotes the words of Pope John Paul to the people of a poor district of Guadalajara: "Being poor, you have a right to my preferential concern. And I shall tell you the reason: the Pope loves you because you are God's first love."

No liberation theologian could have asked for more.

