

RECTOR MAJOR - SPEECHES, MESSAGES

Your Holiness,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Salesian Congregation and the entire Salesian Family to express sentiments of tribute and our best wishes at your election as Bishop of Rome and Supreme Pontiff. I am writing on this day of the solemn inauguration of your Pontificate; may it be an enduring one, replete with all God's blessings. We knew that we had a great Pastor in Benedict XVI, and we are now grateful to the Lord for having given us another great Pastor in his Successor, in you, Your Holiness and beloved Pope Francis.

As Christians and Salesian Religious, it is our desire now to express our joy at your appointment. We renew our loyalty and assure you of the filial respect for you that we have inherited from Don Bosco. He often expressed this in words full of affection and faith when speaking of Peter's Successor.

“Whoever is united with the Pope is united with Christ!” (MB VIII,567)

“We will be absolutely respectful of the Apostolic See in everything, anywhere, any time, wherever the Lord may call us” (MB XV,249).

“For me the Pope's wish is a command” (MB V,874) “His word must be our rule in everything and for everything” (MB VI,494)

Thus spoke our Founder Don Bosco and this is how we feel in our hearts today.

I would like to tell you, Your Holiness, that immediately after your election was announced I spontaneously and joyfully recalled the beautiful and unforgettable experience of Church at Aparecida, in May 2007, where I had the grace of knowing you and greeting you personally. Together we took part in the work there, the celebrations and meetings at the 5th General Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops; we met again at the meeting of Argentine Bishops, which you presided at, so we could establish the place and arrangements for the Beatification of the then Venerable Ceferino Namuncurá. I will never forget your words, full of esteem for the work of our Salesian confreres in Patagonia, and your intervention so that Chimpay could be the place for the celebration.

I am well aware of your closeness and affection for the Salesians, especially at the Almagro community where Fr Enrique Pozzoli, who was your spiritual director, lived; and for Fr Lorenzo Massa, founder of the San Lorenzo Football Team. I was very much appreciative of your testimony on behalf of our Coadjutor Brother, Blessed Artemides Zatti, when you were the Jesuit Provincial, and for your fatherly concern, as Archbishop of Buenos Aires, for our confreres. I have always experienced much joy at your well-known devotion to Mary Help of Christians which so many of our confreres recall.

From the moment of your election and when you presented yourself, we have been fascinated by the name you took as Pontiff, a name that picks up many of your own characteristics and which proclaims a programme of renewal in the Church, returning it to its true identity and to the Gospel through simplicity, austerity, and keeping its gaze fixed on the Lord Jesus.

Your Holiness, we welcome and make our own your wish to have “the courage, yes the courage to walk in the Lord's presence, with his Cross; to build the Church on the blood of the Lord poured out on the Cross and to confess his glory: Christ Crucified. And so the Church will move on ahead.”

In fidelity to the Church and our Founder Don Bosco, we accept this invitation of yours, Your Holiness, and we promise that we will always keep it present in our personal lives, our pastoral choices and our apostolic programmes.

We assure you of our prayers. May the Holy Spirit assist you in the delicate task Providence has entrusted to you and may the Virgin Mary always be your Help in your ministry.

Along with this letter we are sending you, as a sign of our closeness, a statue of Mary Help of Christians. It would be a great gift for us if we could present it to you one 24th of May, in Turin in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, which Don Bosco built with so much love. Perhaps in 2015, when we celebrate the second centenary of his birth.

In a spirit of filial obedience, today and always we assure you of our devotion and affection.

Rome, 19 March 2013
Fr Pascual Chávez Villanueva
Rector Major of the Salesians of Don Bosco

Affezionatissimo in G. C.

Luc. Gio. Bosco