



The Holy See

***VIDEO MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
AT THE VIGIL OF THE APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO CUBA***

Thursday, 17 September 2015

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

My journey to Cuba is just a few days away. For this reason, I would like to send you a fraternal greeting before we meet in person. I am coming to visit you to share faith and hope, so that we may mutually strengthen one another in the *sequela* of Jesus. It does me much good and it helps me a great deal to think of your faithfulness to the Lord, the spirit with which you face your everyday difficulties, the love with which you help and support each other on the journey of life. Thank you for this very courageous witness.

For my part, I would like to convey a message to you that is very simple but which I think is important and necessary. Jesus loves you very, very much. Jesus truly loves you. He carries you in his heart always. He knows better than anyone else what each person needs, what we yearn for, what our loftiest aspiration is, how our heart is. He never abandons us, and when we do not conduct ourselves as he expects, he remains there ever at our side, ready to welcome us, to console us, to give us new hope, a new opportunity, a new life. He never leaves us. He is always there.

I know that you are preparing for this visit with prayer. I am infinitely grateful for this. We need to pray. We need prayer, this contact with Jesus and with Mary. It gives me great joy that, following the advice of my brother Bishops of Cuba, you are repeating several times a day the prayer that we learned as children: Sacred Heart of Jesus, make my heart like unto thine. It is beautiful to have a heart like Jesus', to be able to love as he does, to forgive, to give hope and to accompany.

I want to be among you as a missionary of the mercy and tenderness of God, but allow me to encourage you, too, to be missionaries of this infinite love of God. May no one be without the

witness of our faith, of our love. May everyone know that God always forgives, that God is always at our side, that God loves us.

I will also go to the Shrine of the Virgin of El Cobre as an ordinary pilgrim, as a son who wishes to go to his Mother's house. I entrust this journey to her and I entrust to her all the people of Cuba. May Jesus bless you and may the Virgin Mary take care of you. Thank you.