

Pope Francis Praises Evo Morales' Government Upon Arrival in Bolivia



La Paz, July 9 (teleSUR-RHC)-- In an “historic moment” in Bolivia, Pope Francis praised President Evo Morales' efforts to redistribute wealth and promote social inclusion.

Pope Francis said Bolivia was "taking important steps to include broad sectors in the economic, social and political life of the country." President Morales welcomed the pontiff at an airport near La Paz, saying he had arrived to a “land of peace that seeks justice.”

The pope seemed to be unaffected by La Paz's high altitude. He was expected to chew coca leaves to offset the altitude sickness, but he didn't do so. However, a flight attendant said that aboard the plane the pope did drink a tea made of a mix of coca leaves, chamomile and anise seeds to ward off illness.

In recognition of the Catholic Church's complicated history and its role in the colonization of indigenous peoples, the theme for Pope Francis' visit to Bolivia is "Reconciliation and Renewal."

"In many historic moments, the Church was used for domination, subjugation and oppression. Now the Bolivian people receive you with joy and hope," said President Morales. "We welcome you as the chief representative of the Catholic Church coming to support the liberation of our Bolivian peoples," he added.

Morales also pointed out Bolivia's ongoing struggle to obtain sovereign access to the sea, saying that it was a land that had "been maimed of its right of access to the sea as a result of an invasion." In response, Pope Francis called for "open and frank dialogue" between fraternal countries. "Building bridges instead of building walls; all topics, however thorny they may be, have reasonable, equitable and lasting solutions and in any case must never be a reason for aggression, hatred or enmity that aggravates the situation and makes a resolution more difficult," said Pope Francis.

Pope Francis arrived in Bolivia after a successful three-day visit to Ecuador, where the pontiff also spoke out in favor of Ecuadorean President Rafael Correa's efforts to redistribute wealth and attend to the social needs of the population. In an interview with CNN, Correa said that in his private meeting with the pope that he "greatly appreciates the process that is underway here in Ecuador."

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