

## Pope Francis writes letter to Venezuelan President Maduro



(Vatican Radio) Pope Francis has written a letter to Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro in reference to the situation in the country. The chief of the Vatican Press Office, Father Federico Lombardi sj confirmed the news without giving information about the letter's contents, on Monday.

Amid triple-digit inflation rates, Venezuela is undergoing one of the most serious economic crises of its history and basic goods and food are increasingly difficult to find. Shortages have led to smuggling and a thriving black market while power outages have led to looting.

"The Pope is following with great attention and participation the situation in Venezuela," Lombardi said and cited the pontiff's "most recent public remarks" and the "ample passage, very eloquent" which the Pope dedicated to Venezuela on Easter Sunday in the message before the Urbi et Orbi Blessing.

The Pope said: "With the weapons of love, God has defeated selfishness and death. His son Jesus is the door of mercy wide open to all. May his Easter message be felt ever more powerfully by the beloved people of Venezuela in the difficult conditions which they are experiencing, and by those responsible for the country's future, that everyone may work for the common good, seeking spaces of dialogue and cooperation with all. May efforts be made everywhere to promote the culture of counter, justice and reciprocal respect, which alone can guarantee the spiritual and material welfare of all people."

"The seriousness of the situation appears clearly from the recent Statement of Bishops on 27 April," Fr. Lombardi stated. "For his part, the Nuncio, S.E. Msgr. Giordano, has committed very clearly to encourage the dialogue desired by the Pope."

"In this context, I can say that the Pope himself did recently have a personal letter given to President Maduro, with reference to the situation of the country," Lombardi said.

Venezuelan Bishops press government to permit Church to help

In their 27 April statement, Venezuela's bishops urged the government of President Maduro to allow the Church to bring in much-needed supplies such as food and medicine.

They warned that never before had the country suffered from such an "extreme lack of goods and basic

food and health products” combined with “an upsurge in murderous and inhuman crime, the unreliable rationing of electricity and water, and deep corruption in all levels of the government and society.”

They recalled that the government is duty-bound to “encourage all forms of assistance to its citizens” and to provide basic goods and services.

Authorization, the bishops said, “is urgently needed for private institutions in the country, such as Caritas or other programs of different religious denominations...to bring in food, medicine, and other basic needs from national and international aid groups, and to organize distribution networks in order to meet the urgent needs of the people.”

(from Vatican Radio)

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