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Pope Urges Dialogue, Participation Upon Arrival in Ecuador

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After citing several of the country's saints, Francis urged Ecuador "to confront the current challenges, valuing differences, fostering dialogue and participation without exclusion so that the achievements in progress and development that are being (made) may guarantee a better future for all."

He assured Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa that he could count on the "commitment and cooperation of the (Catholic) Church" in that task.

Francis was welcomed when he disembarked from the papal jet by Correa and by children dressed in traditional costumes.

The pontiff said he was happy and grateful at the warm welcome accorded him at the first stop on his three-country tour, which will also take him to Bolivia and Paraguay.

"Your country is a paradise," Francis added, referring to remarks Correa had made beforehand in his welcoming speech.