



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO H.E. MR GERÓNIMO NARVÁEZ TORRES
AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF PARAGUAY
TO THE HOLY SEE***

Friday 26 August 2005

Mr Ambassador,

I am pleased to welcome you at this ceremony for the presentation of the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Paraguay to the Holy See.

I am grateful for your kind words and for the cordial greeting you have brought me from H.E. Mr Nicanor Duarte Frutos, President of the Republic. I ask you at the same time to convey to him my very best wishes for his peace and well-being and for the prosperity and development of the beloved Paraguayan Nation.

I also ask you to express my deepest gratitude for the heartfelt gesture of respect and closeness that he showed to my venerable Predecessor by sending high Representatives of State institutions to his funeral; and also to me, by his presence as Supreme Mandatary at the solemn liturgical celebration inaugurating my Pontificate as Successor of Peter.

A few years after the celebration of the bicentenary of Paraguay's Independence and its creation as a sovereign Nation, today - as you have clearly pointed out - the Nation has a great opportunity to advance in dialogue and serene coexistence among its own citizens and with other countries, in order to overcome any form of conflict or tension. What better moment could there be than the present, when the legitimacy of the Supreme Magistrature of the State has been re-established, as happened at the last general elections, and when foundations have been laid that promise hopes of greater institutional stability?

I therefore encourage the citizens to practise true democracy, in other words, that of a Nation inspired by the supreme and immutable values, which enables the cultural wealth of people and the gradual development of society to respond to the needs of human dignity. In this regard, it is right to reassert that peace "is the first and supreme good of a society; it implies justice, freedom and order and makes every other good of human life possible" (Paul VI, *Christmas Message*, 23 December 1965).

On this topic, John Paul II stated in his Encyclical *Centesimus Annus*: "A democracy without values easily turns into open or thinly-disguised totalitarianism" (n. 46), for without an ultimate truth to guide and direct political action, "ideas and convictions can easily be manipulated for reasons of power" (*ibid.*).

As *I said to the Diplomatic Corps on 12 May*, the Church ceaselessly proclaims and defends her fundamental rights, which unfortunately are violated in various parts of the world, and strives for recognition of the rights of every human person to life from conception, to food, a home, employment, health-care assistance, the protection of the family and the promotion of social development with full respect for the dignity of men and women, created in God's image.

Government leaders who have received the responsibility to protect and defend these same rights must not falter, however great the difficulties may be, in their commitment to put them into practice. It is necessary for every member of their nation.

Through my Brother Bishops, the Church in Paraguay is aware of the need to respond faithfully to Christ's call so that everyone may live in an atmosphere of hope and peace, with the experience of God's love as the badge of every believing community.

To this end, a national consultation is being promoted whose theme is: *Speak Lord, that your Church may listen*. Its intention is to establish some common lines for pastoral action as well as to spread awareness that the construction of the Homeland is the duty of every citizen. All must feel involved in this marvellous project of building their Homeland and turning it into a people of brothers and sisters.

The Church, therefore, with the experience she has gained from humanity and without in any way wishing to interfere in the politics of States, "is interested in one thing only - to carry on the work of Christ under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, for he came into the world to bear witness to the truth, to save and not to judge, to serve and not to be served" (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 3).

At the end of this agreeable meeting, Mr Ambassador, may I congratulate you. I also offer you my very best wishes that you will have a pleasant stay in Rome and that your diplomatic mission will produce abundant fruits of mutual understanding and close collaboration, strengthening the good relations that already exist between your Country and the Holy See.

With these hopes, which I extend to your distinguished family and collaborators, I ask you kindly to convey my cordial greeting to the Government of Paraguay and especially to the President. Please express my closeness and affection to the Paraguayan People, for whom I implore the motherly protection of Our Lady of Caacupé as I invoke upon everyone an abundance of divine Blessings.

**L'Osservatore Romano* n. 36 p. 4.

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