



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO HIS EXCELLENCY
Mr. HÉCTOR FEDERICO LING ALTAMIRANO,
NEW AMBASSADOR OF MEXICO
TO THE HOLY SEE****

Friday, 10 July 2009

Mr Ambassador,

I am pleased to receive you, Your Excellency, at this solemn ceremony at which you are presenting to me the Letters which accredit you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United Mexican States to the Holy See. I warmly thank you for your respectful words. At the same time I ask you kindly to convey to your President, Mr Felipe de Jesús Calderón Hinojosa, to your Government and to all the noble people of your Country my best wishes, which I accompany with my fervent prayers that the beloved Mexican People, facing the vicissitudes of the present time with courage, determination and unity, may advance on the paths of freedom, solidarity and social progress.

You have come, Your Excellency, as the Representative of a great nation whose identity has been forged over the centuries in a fruitful relationship with the message of salvation that the Catholic Church proclaims. This is evident in many of its popular traditions and festivals. Faith in Jesus Christ has engendered in Mexico a culture that offers a specific and complete meaning of life and a vision of existence that is full of hope. At the same time, it illustrates a series of essential principles for the harmonious development of the whole of society, such as the promotion of justice, work for peace and reconciliation, the fostering of honour and transparency, the fight against violence, corruption and crime, the constant protection of human life and the safeguard of the dignity of the person.

The celebration of the *World Meeting of Families in Mexico City* several months ago has further

highlighted the importance of this institution, so highly esteemed by the Mexican People. In fact, the family, a community of life and love founded on indissoluble marriage between a man and a woman, is the fundamental nucleus of the entire social fabric. Accordingly, it is of supreme importance that it be given satisfactory assistance so that homes do not cease to be schools of respect and mutual understanding, seedbeds of human virtues and a cause of hope for the rest of society. In this context, I would like to repeat to you how pleased I am with the fruits of this important ecclesial meeting, as once again I thank the Authorities of your country and all Mexicans for the visible hardwork they devoted to its organization.

I am pleased to note the good relations that exist between the Holy See and Mexico. They are part of the important progress achieved in recent years in a healthy atmosphere of reciprocal autonomy and collaboration. This must motivate and strengthen us to make them even closer in the future, bearing in mind the important place of religion in the specific character and history of your country. Precisely on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between your country and the Holy See, a series of commemorative events were organized in Mexico City in which various topics of common interest were examined, such as the correct way of understanding an authentic democratic state and its duty to safeguard and encourage religious freedom in all the dimensions of the nation's public and social life. Indeed, religious freedom is not merely one right among the many, nor is it a privilege demanded by the Catholic Church. It is the rock on which human rights are firmly founded, since this freedom reveals in a particular way the transcendent dimension of the human person and the absolute inviolability of his dignity. Religious freedom therefore belongs to the essence of every person, of every people and nation. The central meaning of religious freedom does not allow it to be limited to the mere coexistence of citizens who practise their religion in private. Nor may it be restricted to the free exercise of worship; on the contrary, believers must be offered the full guarantee that they may publicly express their own religion and make their own contribution to building the common good and to a correct social order in every walk of life, without any kind of restriction or coercion. In this regard the Catholic Church supports and encourages this positive view of the role of religion in society and has no wish to interfere in the proper autonomy of civil institutions. Faithful to the mandate received from her divine Founder, she seeks to encourage initiatives that benefit the human person, that fully promote his dignity and that recognize his spiritual dimension, in the knowledge that the best service Christians can offer society is the proclamation of the Gospel, which illuminates a genuine democratic culture and guides them in the search for the common good. It is thus obvious that the Church and the political community are and must feel, though in their different capacities, at the service of the personal and social vocation of human beings themselves (cf. *Gaudium et spes*, n. 76).

Many steps are being taken by the various institutions of your nation to encourage a more just and supportive social order and to get the better of the contradictions that continue to hold the country in their grip. In this regard, it is worth emphasizing the attention and commitment with which the Authorities of your country are confronting such serious matters as violence, the drug trade,

inequalities and poverty, which are a breeding ground for crime. It is well known that for an effective and lasting solution to these problems, technical or security measures do not suffice. What this requires is a broad vision and an effective joining of forces, in addition to encouraging the necessary moral renewal, educating consciences and creating a true culture of life. In this task, the Authorities and the various forces of Mexican society will always encounter the solidarity of the Catholic Church.

One can never sufficiently insist that the right to life must be recognized in its full breadth. In fact every person deserves respect and solidarity from the moment of his conception to his natural death. This noble cause, in which many men and women are courageously involved, must also be supported by the civil authorities in the promotion of just laws and effective public policies that take into account the very great value that every human being possesses at every moment of his life. In this regard, I would like to acknowledge joyfully the initiative of Mexico which, in 2005, eliminated capital punishment from its legislation, as well as the recent measures that some of its States have adopted to protect human life from its origins. These measures regarding such a fundamental issue must be an emblem of your country, of which you must feel justifiably proud since upon the recognition of right to life "every human community and the political community itself are founded" (John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Evangelium vitae*, n. 2).

Mr Ambassador, before concluding this meeting, I want to congratulate you, Your Excellency, your family and the other members of this diplomatic Mission and also to remind you that in my collaborators you will always find the cooperation you may need in the lofty office of representing your beloved nation to the Apostolic See.

I implore God, through the intercession of Mary Most Holy, Our Lady of Guadalupe, to bless, protect and accompany all Mexicans, so close to the Pope's heart, so that in your country harmony, brotherhood and justice may ceaselessly shine.

**L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English* n. 28 p. 4.

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