



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO H.E. Mr FERNANDO FELIPE SANCHEZ CAMPOS,
NEW AMBASSADOR OF COSTA RICA TO THE HOLY SEE**

Friday, 3 December 2010

Mr Ambassador,

In receiving from your hands the Letters of Credence accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Costa Rica to the Holy See, I warmly thank you for your respectful words. I also cordially thank you for the kind greeting you have passed on to me from H.E. Ms Laura Chinchilla Miranda, President of the Republic, which I reciprocate with pleasure and with my best wishes for the success of her service at the head of this beloved nation, so deeply united to the Apostolic See by close and cordial relations and by the special devotion of the Costa Ricans to the Successor of Peter.

Your presence at this solemn ceremony, Your Excellency, revives in my heart sentiments of affection and benevolence for the deeply loved Costa Rican people. Last 2 August, they commemorated with great joy the 375th anniversary of the discovery of the venerable image of *Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles* (Our Lady of the Angels), their heavenly Patroness. As I join in your thanksgiving to the Almighty on this most happy occasion, I do not doubt that the Jubilee Year you are celebrating will produce abundant fruits of Christian life. It will also be a special opportunity to thank the Virgin for the favours received and to raise a prayer for all the needs of this noble country, which wishes to continue, under the protection of the Mother of God, on paths of reciprocal understanding and harmony in an atmosphere of true brotherhood and provident solidarity.

It could not be otherwise, in your homeland which deserves the special interest of the Holy See. In its beauty, mountains and plains, rivers and seas, breezes and winds which give an impetus to a hospitable people proud of its traditions; a people which centuries ago welcomed the seed of the Gospel and saw it spring up vigorously in countless initiatives of education, health care and human

promotion.

Thus the children of your homeland know well that, in Christ, the Son of God, man can always find the strength to combat poverty, domestic violence, unemployment and corruption, seeking social justice, the common good and the integral progress of the person.

No one can feel excluded from the achievements of these lofty goals. In this context the Public Authority must be the first to seek what benefits all by working principally as a moral force that can strengthen the freedom and the sense of responsibility of each one. And it must do all this without diminishing the fundamental values that constitute the backbone of the person's inviolable dignity, starting with the firm protection of human life.

In this regard, I am pleased to recall that the Pact of San José, which recognizes the value of human life from its conception, was signed in your country. Thus it is to be hoped that Costa Rica will not violate the rights of the *nasciturus* [unborn child] with laws that legitimize in vitro fertilization and abortion.

The desire to shape the broad trajectory of reciprocal collaboration, healthy independence and reciprocal respect between the Holy See and Costa Rica recently came into being, thereby strengthening further the fruitful relations in your homeland that exist between the Church and the State.

Following through matters of common interest and paying attention to detail the laws and obligations of the signatories will help in continuing — in a permanent way, more in line with the current circumstances — to guarantee their traditional and fruitful interest with a view to the greater good of the Nation's religious and civic life and to benefiting those who are the object of these concerns.

With this meeting, I would like to assure you, Mr Ambassador that in these days I have especially remembered Costa Rica in my prayers because of the sorrowful consequences of the torrential rains in the country. I have also asked God to grant that your homeland may not cease to consolidate the procedures that make it a reference point for peace in the eyes of the international community.

For this reason it is important that those in charge of its destiny do not hesitate to reject firmly impunity, juvenile delinquency, child labour, injustice and the drug trade; and that they promote important measures for civil security, a satisfactory education for children and young people, the proper attention to prisoners and effective healthcare for all, especially the neediest and the elderly, as well as programmes that enable people to obtain suitable housing and dignified employment.

It is also fundamental that new generations be convinced that conflicts are not won with mere force but rather by converting hearts to good and to truth, by ending to poverty and illiteracy, by strengthening the State of rights and by invigorating the independence and effectiveness of the tribunals of justice.

The reinforcement in society of the fundamental pillar constituted by stability and the union of families will greatly help to broaden this horizon. The family is an institution which, perhaps more than any other, is suffering from the assault of the extensive and rapid changes in society and culture. Nevertheless it cannot lose its true identity since it is called to be a nursery of human and Christian virtues in which children can learn from their parents in a natural way to respect and understand each other and to grow up as exemplary individuals, believers and citizens.

Consequently, nothing that encourages, protects or sustains the family founded on the marriage between a man and a woman will be in vain. In this regard the Church will never tire of providing young people special encouragement so that they may discover the beauty and greatness that faithfully and generously serving matrimonial love and the transmission of life brings.

The defence of peace will likewise be facilitated by the protection of the environment, since they are two closely connected realities. In this regard, Costa Rica, the standard-bearer of friendship and good understanding between nations, is also distinguished for its protection of the environment and for the search for balance between human development and the preservation of resources. This implies a joint and responsible reflection on this most important issue, for the sake of "that covenant between human beings and the environment which should mirror the creative love of God, from whom we come and towards whom we are journeying" (*Message for the World Day of Peace 2008*, n. 7). To this end I encourage all Costa Ricans to continue to strengthen everything that encourages authentic human development, in harmony with creation and avoiding false interests that lack farsightedness in a matter of such transcendence.

To conclude, I would like to express to you, Mr Ambassador, my best wishes for the mission you are beginning today. Please rest assured that in carrying it out you always find on behalf of my collaborators the help you need. With these sentiments, I place under the gaze of *Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles* so widely venerated in your country and throughout Central America, the Authorities and the beloved Costa Rican people, imploring her to sustain with her motherly love all the children of your homeland so that, relying on their rich spiritual heritage they may contribute to ever greater solidarity among people and peoples.

As a pledge of abundant divine gifts, I impart my Apostolic Blessing to you, Your Excellency, and to your family, as well as to the personnel of this Diplomatic Mission.

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