



The Holy See

***DISCURSO DO PAPA JOÃO PAULO II
AO SENHOR AFFONSO ARINOS DE MELLOFRANCO
NOVO EMBAIXADOR DO BRASIL JUNTO À SANTA SÉ
POR OCASIÃO DA APRESENTAÇÃO DAS CARTAS CREDENCIAIS****

Segunda-feira, 3 de Março de 1986

Mr. Ambassador,

I heartily thank you for the noble words which you have stated to me at the beginning of your mission as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Federal Republic of Brazil to the Holy See. In receiving the Letters of Credence from your hands, my thoughts turned, with feelings of highest esteem, to the President of the Republic, Mr. Jose Sarney, who appointed you to this high office which you are now beginning to fulfill. I ask you to convey to him my best wishes in his task for the greater good of the beloved Brazilian nation.

In taking on this office, with the noble sentiments which you have just expressed, Your Excellency will have to follow the work of a host of Ambassadors who have come before you and left a pleasant memory here through their contributions to the harmony of existing good relations. There has been a long tradition on the part of Brazil of maintaining a positive balance, respectful of the autonomy and the very different competencies of the dialoguing parties, which is pursued with cultivated commitment on the basis of mutual esteem, understanding, friendship and collaboration. This dialogue, with the Holy See, is focused on a very specific level different from that on which States having more or less similar problems and interests normally dialogue.

But above all, it is up to Your Excellency to continue representing here a very dear people: good-hearted, docile and hospitable and, at the same time, one that possesses a rich cultural heritage. Among the human, spiritual and Christian values that make up this heritage, there emerges the well-known religious spirit of the Brazilian people, a spirit which has been noted and manifested in countless ways.

2. In fact, I keep in my memory and in my heart the living image of Brazil which I had the opportunity of experiencing in 1980. Equally lively is my gratitude for the fine reception given to me by the authorities and people in the different states I visited during those unforgettable days. Your Excellency's presence reawakens in me the hope with which I desired that experience and journeyed through the Land of the Holy Cross, and which was confirmed and consolidated by personal contact: the hope that this continent like country will know how to solve its problems in order to carry out well the leading role which it is to play in the family of nations at this historic moment,

With this hope exists the confidence that the Church in Brazil - with its mission to serve man in his totality and everywhere - will continue to aid the Brazilian in harmonizing and cultivating that which makes him truly a person; may it also help to answer the many great corresponding challenges, taking into consideration the growing awareness, openly expressed today, that the establishment of an order based on justice and peace is clearly imposed as a moral imperative on all regimes over and above any ideologies and systems. This formation of conscience - as is known - is based on the fact that humanity has a profound unity of interests, vocation and destiny, that all peoples are called to create one family with the variety and richness of their different national characteristics (cf. Message for the World Day of Peace 1986, n. 4).

3. Your Excellency referred to pressing and far-reaching initiatives which your country must undertake as at this time, like everywhere to some extent, it feels the effects of profound and rapid changes. These initiatives are: redistribution, through adequate reforms, of goods and «riches which Providence has abundantly bestowed» on Brazil; revision of the norms for participation in public life; commitment to achieving greater credit stability for the State by law. You referred to the basic ideas that inspire and determine the good will of the highest officials, appointed to look after the political destiny and the common good of the Brazilians, who propose as a goal toward victory, on the spiritual level, the elimination of inhuman conditions of life and everyone's just participation in the goods available.

In this regard, my confidence and that of the Church and the world, while based on providential assistance from above, which will not be lacking, is motivated by the healthy vitality of the new generations, a phenomenon occurring everywhere, thank God. Their consciences appear to be formed to a sense of responsibility which surpasses boundaries, and to the imperative need of nurturing great and lasting ideals. In these the dialogue and solidarity of the entire human family must unite to solve world or more localized problems and

4. The Church in Brazil enjoys a long-standing tradition of richness which can provide security for the Brazilian along the way by safeguarding and cultivating values and seeking common objectives. The light and energy that emanates from the religious mission of the Church itself together with the desire to serve the human community, embodied in its faithful, must dictate the lines of understanding in any collaboration, so that problems may be overcome and conditions created for carrying out the immensely urgent and effective tasks already mentioned. It is a

question of human promotion and development, urgent assistance to less favoured regions and sectors, struggle against various types of calamities, not forgetting those of a social nature which today prevail everywhere in forms of violence, drug abuse, exploitation of misery, unemployment, disintegration of families, etc.

Concerning the vitality of the dioceses, parishes and other communities of various types in which the ecclesial life of your country is developed, I have confidence that, animated by the spirit of the Gospel, the Church in Brazil will continue to foster in the hearts, and especially of youth, in many hopeful young Brazilians – «the greatest wealth of an immensely wealthy country» - a healthy openness to real universal values: love without limits, enlightened freedom, fraternal solidarity, peace as the supreme good in man's earthly pilgrimage, social justice.

It must always be kept in mind that man does not only live through material bread for the body. He has another type of hunger, profound aspirations linked to his basic rights which, when they are undermined or oppressed, weaken the foundations of peace.

5. However, it will always be in fidelity to God and his plan of salvation that the Church will place man in the forefront of its pastoral commitment, while proclaiming that the dignity and vocation of the person and his or her life are something sacred; that there are not too many of us to maintain the sacredness of life, guaranteeing the life of each human being during every moment of its existence: we are not too many to safeguard the precious values of the family and marriage with its inseparable characteristics and inalienable functions with regard to life and the education of children.

Yes, there are not too many of us to help man to be more man by aiding him: to go from the «margin» to the solid road of real life: to discern the values that give meaning to one's existence; to be able to distinguish the suspicions and propaganda with ideological bases that do not lead to God and, lastly, to be capable of overcoming perplexities and disturbances in their ethical schools.

Confidence in the successful outcome of all this is strengthened when the attributes of the Brazilian people can be counted upon: attributes of understanding, tolerance, affability and compassion; which, for the majority, have greater value through the dictates of fraternity which are inseparable from being Christian.

In concluding, I assure you, Mr. Ambassador, of my esteem and of the readiness you will always find here to aid you in the positive fulfilment of your high mission. I wish you success and personal satisfaction and, with my Apostolic Blessing, I ask God's favour for you, for those who are accompanying you, your family and collaborators as well as for the entire, beloved Brazilian people for whom I desire the greatest happiness.

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