



The Holy See

*Discurso al Embajador del URUGUAY,
Excmo. Sr. Don Juan José ZORRILLA**

13 de febrero de 1988

Mr. Ambassador,

It gives me great pleasure to accept the Letters of Credence which you present as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay to the Holy See. In bidding you welcome at this solemn ceremony I wish to express the affection in which I hold the people of Uruguay. Similarly, I wish to thank you for the words you have expressed and the greeting you bring from your President, Dr Julio Maria Sanguinetti. Please convey my best wishes to him.

Last year I had the pleasure of visiting Montevideo, the capital of your country, on the occasion of my pastoral visits to Chile and Argentina. The visit was short in terms of time but significant and intense as a human and spiritual experience. There before my eyes was displayed all the faith and enthusiasm of a country nourished by its Christian roots which will provide reason for hope in the democratic process which is being consolidated in your country.

During the historic meeting in Government House, I wanted to «express thanks publicly to Uruguay which by its solidarity and constructive attitude offered its hospitality: thus, with the signing of the two Montevideo Agreements at the Palacio Taranco, the first step could be taken along that road which, in order to reach its goal, would demand much good will, prudence, wisdom and tenacity of everyone involved» (n. 1).

I am happy to note that in your address Your Excellency spoke of the work of evangelization being done by the Church both in Uruguay and in the other countries of the world. For the Church of Christ, as my venerable predecessor Paul VI pointed out in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, «evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence, transforming humanity from within and making it new» (n. 18). Along these

same lines I said to the people of Uruguay at the memorable celebration which took place on Tres Cruces esplanade, « The Church should project the clear light of the gospel on the problems which grieve humanity in each moment of its history. The word of God is always timely (n. 5). It is the same God who wants «all humanity to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth» (1 Tim 2:4.)

On my apostolic journeys to the countries of Latin America I could witness at first hand the effective work of evangelization done by so many members of the Church, people who have dedicated their lives with generosity and hope to the preaching of the Good News. Also, the work done by the Catholic community in Uruguay stands as an undeniable contribution to the good of society. Not a few problems of a social and even a political nature find their roots in motivations of a moral nature. The Church, with respect and out of a desire to be of service, approaches them through its evangelizing, educational and charitable activity and tries to understand them from the heart of the gospel, with a view to finding a positive solution for them. Thus we see that the Christian life brings dignity to the relationships that exist between individuals and groups. It consolidates the family, it works so that people may live in harmony, and educates for freedom within the framework of justice and mutual respect. Through fidelity to his Christian commitment and the teachings of the Magisterium, the Catholic in Uruguay will also be an unwavering defender of justice and peace, freedom and honesty in both public and private life, the defence of life and of the rights of the human person. All of that will have positive repercussions on society and will help to build up the bonds of fraternity and harmony, through true cooperation between Church and State out of mutual respect and freedom.

The links which have united Uruguay and the Church from the beginning have been many and profound. They have been evident in many experiences which have given the Uruguayan his special character as a citizen and a believer. With the utmost respect for the legitimate autonomy of the civil institutions and authorities, the Church will continue untiringly to work for and to support all initiatives which serve the cause of people, for their dignity of and integral growth, looking always to the spiritual and religious dimensions of the person in his individual, family and social life.

In this regard, the bishops, priests, and religious families in Uruguay will spare no effort in their option for humanity, within the area of the spiritual mission which is proper to them. « However» - as the Second Vatican Council has said - «this religious mission can be the source of commitment, direction and vigour to establish and consolidate the community of men according to the law of God» (GS 42).

Mr. Ambassador, before concluding this meeting, I want to assure you of my good will and support for the success of the important mission which has been entrusted to you. Through the Intercession of Nuestra Señora de los Treinta y Tres (Our Lady of the Thirty Three) the Patroness of Uruguay, I pray to the Most High that with his gifts he may always assist you, your distinguished

family, the rulers of your country and all the beloved people of Uruguay whom I hope to visit again in the near future.

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