



The Holy See

VIAGGIO APOSTOLICO IN URUGUAY, IN BOLIVIA, A LIMA E IN PARAGUAY

***INCONTRO DI GIOVANNI PAOLO II
CON IL PRESIDENTE, LE AUTORITÀ E IL CORPO DIPLOMATICO****

Asunción (Paraguay) - Lunedì, 16 maggio 1988

1. My apostolic journey to these lands has a strictly religious character. It is the continuation of the mission which our Lord Jesus Christ entrusted to the Apostle Peter and his successors: to confirm his brethren in the faith (cf. Lk 22:32); a faith that has been present here for more than four centuries and which has contributed to forming the very roots of the Paraguayan nationality.

I am firmly convinced that the efforts of my brothers in the episcopate and of all the faithful to revivify their Christian commitment will bring immense benefits to your country. The message of Christ, while profoundly human, is also divine. Christ is God made man: God who takes our nature, purifies it, elevates it and brings it to its fulfilment. His message not only recognizes the various values and peculiarities of each culture, but it also increases them. The Word of Christ is, therefore, like the light of the sun, which gives brightness and splendour to the wonderful landscapes of Paraguay.

2. As I said in my recent Encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (cf. nn. 9 and 28), the moral dimension is present in every human activity, whether in the individual sphere or community level; in the fields of economics, politics, social relations. For this reason, the Gospel message is to be projected over these realities, to illuminate them, contributing to the better solution of problems and to achieve objectives that promote the common good. Thus we see that the religious values of the Christian faith dignify the relationships between persons and groups, consolidate the family, foster community living and teach how to live in freedom within the framework of justice and mutual respect. For this reason, every believer, if he is consistent with his Christian commitment, will also be a determined defender of justice and peace, of freedom and honesty in public and private life, of the defence of life in favour of the rights of the human person.

Evangelization, the Church's task in every age and every place, necessarily has repercussions in the life of human society. The Church cannot be confined to her temples, nor is it possible to relegate God to a corner in human consciences. The Church, faithful to her redemptive mission, tries to bring all people closer to God, and in this way, she promotes human dignity, because she seeks to transform the person into Jesus Christ. For this same reason, she asks all Christians to have a sense of co responsibility in Christ's mission and as members of the Church, and to do all they can to affirm and defend the dignity of their brothers and sisters, with all the spiritual and material consequences of that dignity in the life of each person and of the whole society. She asks this, because the commandment of the Lord is: «That you love one another ...as I have loved you» (Jn 13:34). It is this love for others that distinguishes the disciples of Christ (cf. Tm 13:35) and which will cause them to merit reward or eternal punishment (cf. Mt 25:31-46).

3. All of you gathered here, civil authorities and diplomatic representatives of the various countries, have something in common: public service.

The Church holds your activity in high esteem and recognizes in it an essential concern in favour of human dignity. In effect, the attainment of the common good of people supposes the prior acquisition of those conditions of peace and justice, security and order, intellectual and material development that are indispensable for each person to live according to his dignity.

Consequently, politics has an essential ethical dimension, because it is, above all, a service to man. The Church, as keeper of the message of salvation, can and should remind people, and particularly those in government, of the fundamental ethical duties inherent in that search for the promotion of the good of all. As my revered predecessor Pope John XXIII pointed out in the Encyclical *Mater et Magistra*, it is the competency and obligation of political power to create and foster those social conditions that promote the authentic and total well-being of the person, whether as an individual or as a group, by avoiding whatever goes against or is a hindrance to the expression of his authentic dimensions and the exercise of his rights, respecting always the legitimate freedom of individuals, families and intermediate groups (cf. n.65).

The Church, which, in the words of the Second Vatican Council «is not identified with any political community nor bound by ties to any political system» (*Gaudium et Spes*, 76), seeks to mould in each person Christ's image, assuring his transcendent destiny; she greatly appreciates your efforts to promote human dignity. At the same time, in fulfilment of her own mission, she promotes that same dignity when she brings the word and the life of the Saviour to everyone. The Church and the State, endowed with legitimate autonomy in their respective areas of competency, converge, in this way, in the service of man and, because of this, they are called to a mutual and fruitful collaboration.

Like Saint Paul, who began his advice to Timothy by asking for «petitions, intercessions and thanksgiving (...) and especially for all in authority, that we may lead a quiet and tranquil life in all

devotion and dignity» (1 Tim 2:1 2), I thank God today, asking him at the same time for light and encouragement for all of you, so that you will continue with ever more dedication and enthusiasm in the service that is yours.

4. Your mission to promote the well being of all demands your uninterrupted attention. Those in government cannot be content with' issuing general norms for the common good. They should also see to their effective fulfilment, correcting orientations when necessary. ; As you know quite well, it is necessary to be vigilant and constantly to encourage, so that the initiative of all will lead to greater progress of the community, particularly for those most in need. On the other hand there is absolute need to promote tirelessly an active sense of solidarity which will see to it that the improvements gained will redound to the benefit of all and not end up as the patrimony of only a few. Wherever it is deemed necessary, the subsidiary activity of constituted authority should, furthermore, contribute to making it possible for individuals and social groups to fulfil their tasks.

Solidarity is a Christian virtue, intimately related to charity (cf. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 40). We are all required to offer our collaboration for the common good. Your task of governing will be facilitated immensely and will be more effective than you ever thought possible if you always try to facilitate dialogue and the greater participation of all in public affairs. A just government, zealous in its functions, will complete your work, by seeing to it that the rights of the neglected are protected.

Respect for human rights, as you know, is not a question of political convenience, but it derives from the dignity of the person in virtue of his condition as God's creature called to a transcendent destiny. For this reason, any offence to a human being is also an offence to the Creator. The strict demand of the moral values should inspire the work of public authorities in their option for truth and justice in freedom, which should be reflected in the institutional and legal instruments that regulate civic life.

In the material order it is not possible to construct a truly human life that is in opposition to the law of God. For this reason, the defence of public morality acquires a fundamental importance within your field of activity. Whatever strengthens aversion to violence, the respect and veneration for life, and fosters unity and family stability, the dignity of woman and good morals, deserves your careful attention.

5. Solidarity also has an international dimension today. The problems of developing countries are indissolubly tied up with the world economic situation. Its solution could come, in good measure, through better access to international markets, through the removal of unjustified protectionist barriers and through the suitable payment for primary products. Those who, due to historical circumstances, are in an advantageous position. have the human and Christian duty to promote generously the progress of all. Help coming from other states particularly to less developed countries will be ineffective unless it is complemented by an effort directed towards the harmonious insertion of all. Therefore, it is necessary to give the less fortunate the opportunity to

help themselves. As I wrote in the Encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, «The stronger and richer nations must have a sense of moral responsibility for the other nations, so that a real international system may be established which will rest on the foundation of the equality of all peoples and on the necessary respect for their legitimate differences. The economically weaker countries, or those still at subsistence level, must be enabled, with the assistance of other peoples and of the international community, to make a contribution of their own to the common good with their treasures of humanity and culture» (n. 39).

6. In my apostolic pilgrimage throughout these American lands, I had the opportunity to recall on various occasions the first evangelization of this «continent of hope» which began five centuries ago. Together with the preaching of the Word of God, an extensive activity of human development was also accomplished. Paraguay was a pioneer and an example for all the world. From these lands, your ancestors brought the faith and civilization to other places...

I now pray that the Lord may enlighten and bless your work together with those pioneers of Paraguay, may you obtain results in the areas of development, peace and harmony. I also ask the Lord to help the entire international community. I pray that, in the solidarity of nations, the most suitable means may be discovered to aid countries which are capable of less.

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