



The Holy See

***DISCORSO DI GIOVANNI PAOLO II
A S.E. IL SIGNOR FERNANDO HINESTROSA FORERO,
NUOVO AMBASCIATORE DI COLOMBIA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE****

Lunedì, 3 luglio 1989

Mr. Ambassador:

It is with great pleasure that I receive the Letters that accredit you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Colombia to the Holy See. As I heartily welcome you on this solemn occasion, I thank you for the gracious greetings which you have conveyed to me from the President of your Republic, and I express the affection that I have for the people of that noble country.

It has been hardly three years since I made a most satisfactory pastoral visit to your country. The visit was intense from the spiritual and human point of view. I saw for myself in all its energy and force the faith and enthusiasm that belong to a nation animated by a deep fervour, which inspires and promotes in a Christian way the different aspects of life at all levels: in the family, in private life and in society. Thus, on that unforgettable occasion I referred to the special Christian vocation of Colombia;

You did well in mentioning the importance of the evangelizing activity accomplished by the Church in the difficult situation of your country. As Pope Paul VI has already pointed out, to evangelize means «bringing the Good News into all strata of humanity, and through its influence, transforming humanity from within» (Evangeliì Nuntiandi, 18).

Salvation in Jesus Christ also includes the advancement and integral development of man. It should not therefore, be a surprise that the first missionaries on arriving in Colombian territory should seek to implant together with the faith, the moral, social and cultural development of the individual and the family.

With the approaching celebration of the fifth centenary of the presence of Christianity in the American continent, the Colombian hierarchy is seeking ways to follow and enlighten with the pastoral spirit the events and the legitimate aspirations of society.

In the face of the serious problems that affect the common good and the right organization of public institutions, the Church cannot remain indifferent. At present, the contribution of true Christian humanism and its ethical and spiritual values on the part of Christians is a demand that cannot be ignored. Because of this, the Church in Colombia feels the obligation to offer assistance and collaboration faithfully and positively to the State and the citizens. This Apostolic See follows with interest the effort of the Colombian people to bring about a series of social changes, for the benefit particularly of the poorest and most marginalized classes.

Before the constant scourge of violence, radical guerilla activities, the production and trafficking of drugs, the blind action of armed groups - factors which also afflict other countries and which have lately cost Colombia innumerable human lives and caused much suffering to individuals and families – I wholeheartedly support everything that is being done, with the highest respect for the inviolable rights of the person and the existing juridical order, to eradicate those scourges, which hinder the peaceful existence and development of the people.

In my prayers to the Almighty, I always ask that the efforts accomplished for this objective, in a responsible and constructive climate, may open once and for all the path to the much desired national reconciliation. Peace and reconciliation are the unanimous and fervent cry that flows from the depths of the Colombian nation. Sensitive to such a legitimate aspiration, the Episcopal Conference has inaugurated in the beginning of this year the «Gran misión de Reconciliación Nacional» (Great Mission for National Reconciliation). In my prayer I implored the Lord to enable that Mission for Reconciliation among brothers «to penetrate the deepest part of the hearts of all Colombians ... to make them overcome differences, animosities, and antagonisms, and strengthen the will for understanding and comprehension ... so that, as children of the same Father, we may be able to accept one other as brothers in his name».

As I said in Barranquilla, Jesus Christ «alone is able to knock down the walls of hostility and to make new people of us, reconciled with the Father through the Cross. He has come to announce peace» (cf. ORa, 8 Sept. 1986, p. 7). In view of all this, I am fully confident that Colombia, by means of a developing and constantly improving policy in educational, family and socio-economic matters, will continue its efforts in the unavoidable task of obtaining for all its citizens equal access to the common heritage of the nation's material and spiritual riches and the full and responsible participation in the fulfilment of their duties and rights. Only thus can we expect that order desired by God to flourish again in the framework of dialogue and fraternal peace.

Mr. Ambassador, in conclusion, I pray that the sublime mission entrusted to you will tighten yet

further the cordial bonds which the Republic of Colombia maintains with this Apostolic See. At the same time, I request Your Excellency, to convey my most respectful greeting to the President of the Republic, Dr Virgilio Barco Vargas, as well as to all Colombians, on whom I Invoke the constant divine protection.

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