



The Holy See

***DISCORSO DI GIOVANNI PAOLO II
A S.E. IL SIGNOR FERMIN RODRIGUEZ PAZ,
NUOVO AMBASCIATORE DI CUBA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE****

Venerdì, 3 marzo 1989

Mr. Ambassador,

I have listened with pleasure to the words of friendship that you have desired to express to me as you present your Letters of Credence which accredit you as the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Cuba to the Holy See. In extending to you a warm welcome on the occasion of this solemn act, I also wish to reiterate before you the sincere affection I bear towards all the people of the Cuban nation.

I would also like to respond to the kind greetings that the President of the State Council and Government of Cuba, Dr Fidel Castro Ruz, wished to send to me through you, and I ask you to send him my very best wishes for the material and spiritual prosperity of the nation.

You alluded, Mr. Ambassador, to the supreme good of peace and to the work that the Holy See carries out to contribute to the solution of the grave problems that exist in the international community, and to build a more just social order that would make our world a more welcoming and fraternal place, where the values of peaceful coexistence and solidarity would be a constant point of reference. The Church, faithful to the command she received from her divine Founder, commits herself to the noble cause of the service of all peoples without distinction, inspired only by her irrevocable option on behalf of the dignity of man and the protection of his legitimate rights. The spiritual and religious character of her mission allows her to carry out this service free from earthly motivations and particular interests, for, as the Second Vatican Council teaches, «not committed to any one culture or to any political, economic or social system, the Church can be a very close bond between the various communities of men and nations, provided they have trust in the Church and guarantee her true freedom to carry out her mission» (*Gaudium et spes*, 42).

Peace between individuals and peoples is an arduous task in which we must all work together generously. It is not to be attained through intransigence or egocentrism, either national, regional, or of blocs. Rather, it is to be reached through the nurturing of hope, understanding and solidarity, which bind men together as brothers in this world that was created by God so that all of us might share in an equitable way in its goods.

However, there is cause to worry about the international scene in general, and that of Latin America in particular, due to the great antagonisms and differences that some countries face; countries which geography itself, cultural roots, language and the Christian faith have united in the course of history.

The Holy See – without any other force than the moral authority conferred upon her in her mission in the great causes of mankind – will continue supporting all initiatives undertaken to overcome confrontation and create solid foundations for a more stable and peaceful coexistence.

Among the factors that today work against just international relations, you mentioned, Mr. Ambassador, the serious problem of the foreign debt that hampers many developing peoples. In this regard, the Holy See, with a document from the Pontifical Commission «Iustitia et Pax», has sought to offer its contribution by laying out the criteria of justice, equity, and solidarity. These inspire initiatives on the regional and international levels in an effort to arrive at acceptable solutions that do not frustrate the legitimate aspirations of so many countries whose development is overdue. In the face of the great challenge that the debt of developing countries represents today, it is becoming necessary to share.

It must not be forgotten that many economic, social, and political problems find their roots in the moral order, to which, in a respectful way, the Church responds through her work of education and evangelization. For this reason, the Church considers as her specific mission «the necessary projection of the Gospel into all areas of human life; in society, in culture, in economic life, and in education» (Address to the Bishops of Cuba, 26 August 1988). Faced with the profound crisis of values that today affects institutions as well as the family, or broad sectors of the population such as youth, the Church, in a spirit of reconciliation and love, offers reasons to hope for the good of the entire human community.

Mr. Ambassador, I want to reiterate the firm desire of the Church in Cuba to collaborate, within her own religious and moral mission, with the authorities and various institutions of your country on behalf of the higher values and the material and spiritual prosperity of the nation. In this regard, we must take pride in the climate of dialogue and greater understanding which has been growing between the ecclesiastical hierarchy and the civil authorities in the past few years. This has been made clear by the recent visits of various ecclesiastical personalities to Cuba as you yourself have pointed out. I pray that the positive signs that are now becoming evident, such as the admission of a certain number of priests and religious sisters to minister among the Cuban ecclesial

communities, may continue to develop and be strengthened into the necessary level of effective freedom that the Church requires to carry out her mission of evangelization.

It is also inspiring to see the respectful dialogue with the culture and the social situation that led to the Cuban National Ecclesial Meeting that took place in February 1986. It is to be hoped that it may facilitate a more active presence of Catholics in public life, contributing to the great task of the common good. In the measure in which they are faithful to the teaching and demands of the Gospel, they will also be sincere defenders of justice, peace, freedom, honour, respect for life, and solidarity with the most needy. The Cuban Catholic, as a citizen and a child of god cannot use to participate in the development of the civil community, nor remain aloof from the social programme.

Mr. Ambassador, before finishing our meeting, allow me to assure you of my good will and support, that you may carry out joyfully the noble mission that has been entrusted to you. I also ask that you extend my respectful and cordial greetings to the President, Government, Authorities and people of Cuba, while I invoke the gifts of the Most High on you, your family and co-workers, and all my beloved children of the Cuban nation.

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