



The Holy See

***DISCURSO DEL SANTO PADRE JUAN PABLO II
AL SEÑOR MARIO ALFONSO DE LA CERDA BUSTAMANTE,
EMBAJADOR DE GUATEMALA ANTE LA SANTA SEDE****

Sábado 14 de noviembre de 1992

Mr. Ambassador,

On receiving the Letters that accredit you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Guatemala to the Holy See, I am happy to offer you a most cordial welcome, as well as my best wishes for the success of the important mission, which your Government has entrusted to you.

I would first like to thank you for the noble sentiments you have expressed as well as for the respectful meetings that you convey to me from the President of the Republic, representing the sincere support of the beloved children of your nation, whose feelings of welcome and affection for my person have remained unchanged since my pastoral visit among you.

Your Excellency has come here to represent a country that is distinguished for its Catholic faith and for its support of Peter's See. It is moreover a satisfaction to know that, sensitive to the aspirations of your fellow citizens, you wish to devote your best efforts to increasing the good relations that exist between Guatemala and the Holy See. For this reason, as Vatican Council II reminds us, «By her nature and mission the Church is universal in that she is not committed to any one culture or to any political, economic or social system. Hence she can form a very dose unifying effect on 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, n. 42).

On the other hand, it cannot be forgotten that many social and political problems are rooted in the moral order it is in this field that the Church has undertaken the task of forming consciences and opinions, of inspiring transcendent values and above all of preaching the Gospel. In this respect,

faithful to the teaching of the Gospel and the social doctrine of the Church, the Catholics of Guatemala have the inescapable duty always to promote and safeguard justice, peace freedom and human rights. In fact, only great good for Guatemala can result from loyal cooperation and understanding between the Church and the civil authorities.

In your message, Mr. Ambassador, you analyzed the various evils afflicting Guatemalan society, especially its poorest sectors and those who are the victims of all kinds of violence. In this respect moved by the desire to contribute to the common good and to a better understanding between all citizens and the public authorities, the Episcopate of this nation, in a recent document, recognized the great gift of the faith received and the value of the early missionary work as it promotes the new evangelization which – taking into account the people's Catholic roots and their many different cultures – «consolidates, purifies and makes the kingdom of God more powerful» (Joint Pastoral Letter 500 años sembrando el Evangelio, 15 August 1992).

As heralds of Christian hope, the Bishops are firmly committed to continuing their work of reconciliation, so that this nation may be strengthened in the so ardently desired peace process, through an authentic democracy and the freedom that recognizes the rights of all citizens. In this regard, I cannot but mention Bishop Rodolfo Quezada Toruno of Zacapa and Prelate of Santo Cristo de Esquipulas in a particular way, and express my deep gratitude to him for his tireless work as a «peacemaker». He is making a constant effort for dialogue and understanding in order to make people lay down their weapons, to overcome all forms of violence and to encourage the real integration in public life of all those who feel that they are, and who indeed are, children of the same homeland.

In order for these wishes to become a source of strength in your country, I implore the constant protection of the Most High for the beloved Guatemalan people, especially their leaders, and in a particular way, for Your Excellency, and for your distinguished family as well as for your assistants in this diplomatic mission that is now beginning.

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