



The Holy See

DISCURSO DEL SANTO PADRE JUAN PABLO II AL SEÑOR FILADELFO CHAMORRO CORONEL, EMBAJADOR DE NICARAGUA ANTE LA SANTA SEDE*

Sábado 25 de junio de 1994

Mr. Ambassador,

I am pleased to offer you my most cordial welcome at this solemn act of presenting the Letters of Credence accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Nicaragua to the Holy See.

I am sincerely grateful for the friendly words you have addressed to me, and in particular for the respectful greeting of the President of the Republic, Mrs. Violeta Barrios de Chamorro. I ask you to convey to her my best wishes for peace and well-being, together with my wishes for the prosperity and integral progress of this beloved nation.

In your address, Mr. Ambassador, you referred to the Catholic status of the great majority of the Nicaraguan people and their particular Marian devotion as well as to the presence of the Church in the nation's life. Faithful to her commitment to bring the message of salvation to all people, the Church herself is totally committed to furthering the promotion and protection of the dignity of the human person. Indeed, human values, above all the dignity of men as children of God, should shape relations between individuals and groups so that the legitimate rights of each may be safeguarded and that society may enjoy stability and harmony. This becomes even more necessary when one observes the crisis of moral and ethical values which is affecting many societies today, including those with a long Christian tradition.

On this topic, in a recent collective document the Bishops of your country did not fail to show their concern about the moral crisis which is also making its presence felt in Nicaragua: «resentment, hatred, cruelty to one's neighbour, sins which normally the Nicaraguan does not often commit,

have become, as a result of years of atheistic education and systematic, persistent campaigns against Catholic morality, vices rooted in the hearts of many and are the cause of ambition, moral licentiousness, injustice, theft and even atrocious crimes» (Para avivar la esperanza del Pueblo de Dios, 1 May 1994).

The Government which you have the honour to represent, Mr Ambassador, has demonstrated its intention to be committed to improving the Constitutional State and to promoting participatory democracy, on both the political and economic levels. This also implies the need to reconcile political activity with ethical values, especially the effective and sincere vocation of service to the common good. It should not be forgotten that many social and political problems originate in contempt or neglect of the moral order. Through her evangelical and educational activity, the Church promotes moral principles and thus we see that Christian life reinforces the family, brings dignity to human relationships, encourages harmony and teaches people to live freely within the framework of justice and mutual respect.

To build a more just and fraternal society, it is essential that the Christian concept of life and the Church's moral teaching should continue to be values which inspire those who are working for the good of the nation. In this way it will be possible to respond satisfactorily to the needs and aspirations of the people, collaborating with God's plans at the same time.

The challenges of the nation's future are in fact many and create obstacles that are not always easy to overcome. However, these difficulties should not be a reason for discouragement, since Nicaragua counts on the greatest riches that a people can have: its Christian roots, as a firm basis for building a more fraternal and peaceful society: a society where industry, honesty, the spirit of solidarity and sharing prevail; a society where the basic rights of all citizens, especially the weakest, are safeguarded. The issues that are now a cause for concern should be faced with clear-sightedness, with the responsible participation of all and constant focus on God whose help will never fail.

Mr. Ambassador, my words are intended to give encouragement and hope. I know that the wounds and antagonisms of a still recent past have not yet healed, delaying social cohesion and legitimate aspirations to progress. This is where renewed efforts to overcome every kind of conflict and to foster a growing solidarity between all Nicaraguans come into play. And this is where the important role of spiritual values is found. I hope that in the ups and downs of democratic life, the Church's action will become ever more present with a renewed vocation of service at all levels and thereby contribute to the advancement of Nicaraguans and to safeguarding and promoting the highest values.

The Church strives to defend the great human causes wherever she is present. By her spiritual and religious nature she can therefore carry out this service over and above earthly motives or individual interests, as the Second Vatican Council teaches: «she is not committed to any one

culture or to any political, economic or social system. Hence she 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, n. 42).

From the very outset, many strong links have bound Nicaragua to the Church and have shaped the life and feelings of its people. For this reason, the Church herself, motivated by her desire to witness to the Gospel, and alien to passing or selfish interests, will continue to offer her valuable help in such important sectors as education, aid to the most underprivileged, health-care services and the overall promotion of the person as a citizen and child of God.

Mr. Ambassador, before concluding this meeting, I would like to express my esteem and support to you, together with my best wishes that your mission which starts today, may be fruitful for the good of your noble country. I ask you to convey my sentiments and feelings to your Government, and through the mediation of la Purísima, as Nicaraguans like to call Our Lady, I invoke the Blessing of God upon you, your family and your co-workers, and upon all the beloved people of Nicaragua.

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