



The Holy See

***DISCURSO DEL SANTO PADRE JUAN PABLO II
AL SEÑOR AUGUSTO ANTONIOLI VÁSQUEZ
NUEVO EMBAJADOR DE PERÚ ANTE LA SANTA SEDE****

Lunes 18 de diciembre de 1995

Mr. Ambassador,

1. It gives me great pleasure to receive the Letters you present accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Peru to the Holy See. As I welcome you, I would like to thank you for your kind words as well as for the attentive greeting which your President, Mr. Alberto Fujimori, has wished to convey to me through you and to which I respond by asking you kindly to express my best wishes for peace and well-being to him.

2. You have come in order to represent a nation that has enjoyed and is enjoying the widespread and deeply-rooted presence of the Catholic faith in the life of its citizens. Many strong ties exist which have always linked Peru with the Church and have shaped the life and feelings of its people. In this regard, I am pleased to recall the luminous examples of holiness which your country has offered the Church and humanity: St Rose of Lima and St Martin de Porres, St Toribio de Mogrovejo, St John Macias and St Francis Solano, Blessed Ana de Monteagudo and others.

Moreover, the Church in this nation, under her Pastors' wise and prudent guidance, is now working steadfastly to ensure that the moral values and the Christian concept of life continue to inspire all those who, in one way or another, are striving to improve their homeland. Attentive to people's deepest needs, she fulfils her work in her own area, enlightening with spiritual and ethical principles those sectors which contribute to the common good. Within the area of her own proper mission, she will continue to collaborate with the various public institutions so that citizens find satisfactory responses to the challenges of the present time.

3. In this role of mutual collaboration, the Church carries on a dialogue with the «people of our day, so that they will come to appreciate the grandeur of the goods of marriage, family and life; so

that they will come to appreciate the great danger which follows when these realities are not respected, or when the supreme values which lie at the foundation of the family and of human dignity are disregarded» (Letter to Families, n. 23). This is why with an integral vision of man, she reasserts the irreplaceable role which belongs to the family whose profound identity must be defended and accepted as «a firmly grounded social reality. It is also, in a way entirely its own, a sovereign society» (ibid., n. 17). In fact the family nucleus must be at the service of a fully human life and must be the basis of social harmony, since, no human society can run the risk of permissiveness in fundamental issues regarding the nature of marriage and the family! Such moral permissiveness cannot fail to damage the authentic requirements of peace and communion among people. It is thus quite understandable why the Church vigorously defends the identity of the family and encourages responsible individuals and institutions, especially political leaders and international organizations, not to yield to the temptation of a superficial and false modernity~ (ibid.).

Finally, it is a question of promoting the true values which are not the exclusive heritage of Christians but are shared by millions of people of different races and religious beliefs, who increasingly and with greater persistence desire to defend the family.

4. In recent times I have seen aspirations to peace emerge with fresh ardour among your people who are aware that dialogue is always the best solution to conflicts. Likewise, efforts have redoubled to overcome the scourge of drugs, «a lamentable poison which some exploit without the least scruple», (Homily in Cuzco, 3 February 1985, n. 4, L'Osservatore Romano English edition, 25 March 1985, p. 3), terrorism and armed conflict, which «offends God in the one who suffers it and the one who practises it» (Discourse in Ayacucho, 3 February ;985, n. 6; L'Osservatore Romano English edition, 25 March 1985; p. 10). These are signs of hope which enable us to glimpse a better future. In order to persevere in this direction it is essential to continue to promote an education that encourages respect for life and the dignity of the human person, as well as political directives that ensure social coexistence, the right to work, and above all justice and peace.

5. I am aware of the difficulties which your country must face at the present time in its praiseworthy effort to achieve substantial economic and social development. The burden of the international debt and the desire to solve demographic problems in the short-term, can easily lead to the temptation to face and solve these serious problems without respecting the dignity of individuals and families, and every person's inviolable right to life (cf. *Evangelium vitae*, n. 16). For this reason it is also urgent, at the international level, to be able to rely on clear and unwavering family and social policies, with programmes for cooperation and for the just production and distribution of resources. Only in this way the continuous effort to bring about a worthy and supportive development in your nation, which reaches the neediest in particular, will succeed in building a more human, tolerant society open to the transcendent.

6. At the moment when you are preparing to begin the lofty role to which you have been designated, I would like to express my best wishes for the happy and successful outcome of your mission to this Apostolic See which is always concerned that the good relations already existing with the Republic of Peru should be maintained and reinforced. As I ask you to express my sentiments and wishes to the President of the Republic, your Government and the beloved Peruvian people, I assure you of my prayers to the Almighty so that through the intercession of Our Lady of Evangelization with his gifts, he may always assist you, your distinguished family your co-workers, the authorities and citizens of your noble country, whom I always remember with particular affection and upon whom I invoke abundant Blessings from the Most High.

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