



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. Mr Felipe H. Paolillo,
AMBASSADOR OF URUGUAY TO THE HOLY SEE***

Friday, 6 December 1996

Mr Ambassador,

1. I am pleased to receive you on this solemn occasion of the presentation of the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Oriental Republic of Uruguay to the Holy See, and I am sincerely grateful to you for the words you have kindly addressed to me, expressing the *good relations existing between this Apostolic See and your country, whose inhabitants have been able to preserve in their traditions deep human and Christian values, the legacy of a glorious past*, which is having positive repercussions in social life today.

I am likewise grateful for the greeting of Dr Julio María Sanguinetti, President of the Republic, who was kind enough to visit me last May, thereby stressing not only his personal sentiments of esteem and friendship, but also appreciation of and desire for *mutual co-operation between Church and State for the attainment of the common good*. I am most grateful to you and I ask you to be so good as to convey to your country's leader my very best wishes for his lofty and delicate mission.

2. The Church, Mr Ambassador, faithful to her task of bringing the message of salvation to all people, is fully committed to promoting all that can further uphold the dignity and advancement of the human being since "man is the primary route that the Church must travel in fulfilling her mission" (*Redemptor hominis*, n. 14). In fact, *respect for the values of the person, especially of his condition as a child of God, should shape relationships between individuals and peoples*, so that the legitimate rights of each one may be safeguarded and society enjoy stability and harmony. For this reason, I am pleased to point out how the Church in Uruguay, through her Pastors, has not ceased to advance, by her evangelizing mission, the great causes of man and Uruguayan society. As in other places in the world, the local Church carries out her activity, remaining faithful to her vocation and mission, which is to proclaim Jesus Christ and the salvation he brings to us, thus serving all men and especially the needy, the poor and the marginalized. In fulfilling this mission, *dialogue and co-operation with the various social institutions* must be well received, keeping intact the respective fields of competence

and the areas of independence.

3. In my concern for the whole Church, I follow with interest the events in the political and social life of your country, in which it is necessary to recognize and point out a series of significant changes. Your Government is committed to encouraging economic and social development, as well as to fostering peaceful and harmonious coexistence among all, based on justice and solidarity. To achieve these goals, all the means used must be inspired by ethical principles, so that society may always rest on the inalienable dignity of man and the family.

In this regard, *the protection given to the family in the current Constitution of Uruguay (art. 40) which considers it the basis of society*, should be recognized. For this reason “the State will care for its moral and material stability, so that children may receive a better education within society”. Today, facing the threats which are hanging over this institution such as divorce, irregular unions or the lack of job security which prevents young people from facing the demands of marriage, the Church is actively engaged in promoting conditions which help to overcome these problems. However, it is necessary also to recall that the family and protection of life must be at the centre of government policies.

4. I had the opportunity to remind the President of the Republic that: “It is to be hoped that constructive dialogue between the civil authorities and the Pastors of the Church in your nation will strengthen the relations between the two institutions, and that the State and the other public authorities will offer concrete and effective collaboration, in the *important work that the Church in Uruguay is undertaking in Catholic educational centres*. Among those I would like to mention the Catholic University of Dámaso Antonio Larrañaga, oriented to training consciences in the true and essential spiritual values” (*Address to the President of Uruguay*, n. 5, 25 May 1996, *L’Osservatore Romano* English edition, 12 June 1996, p. 4). In fact, in a field as important and transcendent as teaching, the Church does not ask for privileges, but only for the space and the means which are her due, in order to fulfil her mission, and she desires to co-operate for the purpose of serving man better.

The Church makes a notable contribution in Uruguay to the field of education, which is shown by her work directed to the integral formation of children and young people, the future of the nation, many of whom could one day occupy positions of responsibility in running the country.

In this regard, also safeguarding teaching in public institutions, *it should be realized that a monopoly in the distribution of subsidies destined for education would harm the freedom of teaching itself and would endanger the exercise of the right of parents to choose the type of education they desire for their children*. This is why I would like to repeat the appeal I made when I visited the Catholic University in Montevideo on 7 May 1988: “I harbour the desire that those who are responsible shall make sure that subsidies from the State are distributed in such a way that the parents, without distinction of religious belief or civic convictions, may be truly free in the exercise of their right to choose the education of their children, without having to bear unacceptable burdens” (*Address to the World of Culture*, n. 3; *L’Osservatore Romano* English edition, 23 May 1988, p. 3).

5. Mr Ambassador, before concluding this meeting, I would like to express to you my best wishes that the mission beginning today may be fruitful and successful. I ask you again kindly to convey my sentiments and hopes to the President of the Oriental Republic of Uruguay and to the other authorities in your country, as, through the intercession of

Our Lady of the Thirty-Three, Mother of all Uruguayans, I invoke God's blessing and the gifts of the Spirit upon all the beloved children of your noble nation, which I always recall with warm appreciation.

**L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly edition in English 1997 n.1 p.5.*

Copyright © Libreria Editrice Vaticana

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana