



The Holy See

***DISCURSO DEL SANTO PADRE JUAN PABLO II
AL SEÑOR LUIS MARÍA RAMÍREZ BOETTNER,
NUEVO EMBAJADOR DEL PARAGUAY ANTE LA SANTA SEDE****

Lunes 8 de julio de 1996

Mr. Ambassador,

1. With great pleasure I offer you my most cordial welcome at this ceremony during which you have presented me with your Letters of Credence as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Paraguay to the Holy See. I also return with sincere pleasure the affectionate greeting which Mr. Juan Carlos Wasmosy, President of the Republic, has conveyed to me through you, assuring him of my prayers and best wishes for prosperity and spiritual welfare for all the inhabitants of the beloved Paraguayan land.

2. Today I remember with pleasure the visit that President Wasmosy paid me in February of last year. You yourself were a member of his entourage. It was a fitting occasion to reaffirm the good relations between Paraguay and the Holy See, and it highlighted the deep Christian roots of this people. It is also encouraging to see that the peaceful transition to a new constitutional order is gradually leading to the reinforcement of the constitutional State. The latter certainly needs to strengthen its institutions and to inspire its citizens' trust in them so that all may actively work together for the common good.

3. In Paraguay the way to a more stable democracy, which will ensure the harmonious promotion of human rights for the sake of all, is conditioned, as it is in other areas of the American continent, by economic imbalances and serious social crises which especially affect those with scarce material resources.

It should not be forgotten that the economic imbalances you mentioned are aggravated by the gradual collapse and loss of moral values. Among its effects are corruption, the disintegration of

the family, permissive habits and scant respect for life, aspects which the Paraguayan Bishops addressed in their document «El saneamiento moral de la nación». In this regard, you must consider it one of your urgent priorities to restore moral values by political and social policies that promote professional ethics and total respect for justice and its independence, in order to gain the citizens' trust by defending their rights but, at the same time, by making them realize their own responsibility to fulfil their duties.

4. In your words, Mr Ambassador you recalled my Pastoral Visit to Paraguay in 1988. I then had the joy to see, from the beginning of the evangelization of the American continent, how the Christian faith became rooted in your land and influenced public life. In its organization, the specific form established by the Jesuits in the so-called «Reductions» stands out, a religious and social structure in which St Roque Gonzalez de Santa Cruz distinguished himself. He was the first Paraguayan saint I was able to canonize during my above-mentioned visit to your country.

It is this initial heritage of faith, with its different expressions of popular piety down the centuries, that the Bishops with their priests and the various religious communities in Paraguay, wish to safeguard and to increase through the new evangelization.

5. You also mentioned the theme of the family as a basic and essential unit for human development. In this regard the support and promotion which the Holy See gives the family by considering it a privileged place for evangelization is well known, as I pointed out to the Paraguayan Bishops during their last visit to Rome. The various public institutions are therefore responsible for intervening in favour of families, and as regards the demographic direction of the population, they must never have recourse to methods that do not respect the dignity of the person and his fundamental rights, as happens when policies advocating contraception, sterilization or abortion are encouraged.

On this point, special care must be devoted to education in true moral and spiritual values, by promoting an authentic cultural policy that strengthens and spreads these fundamental values in a truly human society which, like yours is rooted in the faith and in Christian principles.

In this regard, it is necessary to reinforce respect for the truth, a determined commitment to justice and solidarity honesty, the capacity for dialogue and participation at all levels. As the Church's Magisterium has repeatedly said, it is a question of continuing to foster and achieve living conditions which enable individuals and families as well as intermediate groups and associations to fulfil themselves and to realize their legitimate aspirations.

6. A country called to play an increasingly active part in the concert of nations must promote in a lasting way better and more adequate training for its people. In this regard, it is to be hoped that the educational reform already under way may produce results by making it possible for the complete education of the individual to be the patrimony of all and to prepare the new generations

so that they can fully assume their responsibilities as citizens by playing an active role in the nation's progress.

7. Mr. Ambassador, I am very aware you that in many respects Paraguay is going through a critical period. I follow this complex process with deep trust, recalling that a democracy stands or falls depending on whether it safeguards the values it embodies and promotes. Likewise, I would like to assure you of respectful and loyal collaboration between the local Church and the State, since she is anxious to serve the great causes of man as a citizen and a child of God.

Before concluding this ceremony, I would like to offer you my best wishes Mr. Ambassador, that your mission which begins today may bear lasting fruit. Please convey my sentiments and hopes to the President and the other authorities of the Republic, as I invoke abundant blessings from the Most High on you, your distinguished family and your co-workers, as well as on all the children of the noble Paraguayan nation, through the constant and maternal intercession of the Pure and Stainless Conception of Caacupe.

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