



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. Mr ALFREDO LUNA TOBAR,
AMBASSADOR OF ECUADOR TO THE HOLY SEE***

Thursday, 26 June 1997

Mr Ambassador,

1. I am pleased to receive the Letters accrediting Your Excellency as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Ecuador to the Holy See on this occasion which also gives me the opportunity to offer you my most cordial welcome.

I am sincerely grateful for the respectful greeting that President Fábian Alarcón has conveyed to me through Your Excellency, an expression of your country's spiritual closeness to this Apostolic See, a closeness built up throughout its history by the Church's continuous work through her members and her institutions. Please convey my best wishes to the President, together with the assurance of my prayers to the Most High that he will grant prosperity and spiritual well-being to all Ecuadoreans.

Your kind words, Mr Ambassador, have made me relive the moments of my Pastoral Visit to your country, of which I have lasting and grateful memories. There I had the opportunity to share your peoples' concerns and hopes, to profess the same faith with them in the various moving celebrations, and to appreciate "the most genuine values of the Ecuadorean soul, which even in the midst of difficulties shows its trust in God and its resolution to remain faithful to the heritage of its forebears: its Christian faith, the Church, its culture, its traditions, its vocation to justice and freedom" (cf. *Farewell Address*, 31 Jan. 1985; *L' Osservatore Romano* English edition, 4 March 1985, pp. 5, 10).

2. I am pleased to see that the bonds uniting the Ecuadorean people with the See of Peter are

strongly enhanced by our cordial relations which, on the basis of agreements and mutual respect, permit trustworthy and fruitful collaboration between Church and State. This collaboration sometimes extends to international forums, in which great issues of interest for all humanity are debated today. It is desirable that this cooperation continue and bear fruit for the good of Ecuador. The Church, for her part, feels it her duty to promote the fundamental values that safeguard the dignity of the person such as, among others, the protection of human life at all stages of its development, and the defence of the family as a basic and irreplaceable institution for the individual and for society. Likewise, through integral education and religious formation, she endeavours to promote the transcendent aspects of the human being necessary for his complete maturity and personal fulfilment in freedom. The Church's mission to proclaim Christ as the one Saviour of mankind and of history also demands efforts for peace between nations and within each one.

Thus it is comforting to know that the Government you represent has firmly resolved to engage in dialogue and broad collaboration with international agencies, in which it certainly has an important word to say about its own tradition, culture and belief. It is important that this voice should not be lacking in the face of conceptions or proposals which, under the pretext of partial or temporary success, violate the most sacred moral principles and actually lead to the degradation of individuals and of society itself.

3. Overcoming the barriers of national isolationism means saving peoples from international marginalization and impoverishment (cf. *Centesimus annus*, n. 33), which is not limited to economic aspects but must also be applied to the world of ideas, basic rights and values. In this regard, I recalled in the Message for the World Day of Peace this year the importance of multinational organizations and of dialogue for discussing, with good hopes of success, issues that could be a cause of conflict among peoples and nations (cf. n. 4; *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, 18 Dec. 1996, pp. 3, 8).

A cause of satisfaction in this regard is the will your Government has expressed to continue the discussions in Brasília, with the constructive support of the guarantor countries, and which aim at reaching a worthy and mutually acceptable solution to the disagreements about the well-known border problem with the sister nation of Peru. I can assure you that my special prayers to the Almighty will not be lacking for the successful outcome of the efforts to find a solution that will establish a stable peace between these two sister nations. This will be more easily accomplished if diplomatic initiatives are accompanied by an authentic pedagogy of peace, which helps to increase the attitude of co-operation and harmony among all.

4. The international community has followed, not without a certain apprehension, the unforeseen events which, starting this year, have put the spirit of the Ecuadorean people and their most important institutions to the test. Providentially, the difficulties were overcome promptly and peacefully without falling into the trap of violence, and so political institutions were reinforced.

The Government you represent, Mr Ambassador, has publically committed itself to improving the constitutional State for a better guarantee of institutional stability, while at the same time it has taken the firm decision to do everything possible to establish a more just social order. The pursuit of both objectives calls for the reconciliation of political activity with ethical values, so that the public authorities will be imbued, in their goals and methods, with the sincere desire to serve the common good without reserve.

In this difficult undertaking, problems could tempt one to seek reductionist solutions, which do not pay due attention to the spiritual and human values that are both a sign and guarantee of a truly promising future, firmly rooted in the social fabric of the Ecuadorean people. It would in fact be hard for a nation to achieve great goals if the highest ideals and deepest values were not lived with firm conviction by the citizens. In this regard, one is comforted that the “Freedom of Education Law for Ecuadorean Families” is in force. It aims, through religious instruction in the schools, at fostering the students’ integral formation, which will also promote the development of the human being’s transcendent dimension. I offer my best wishes for a suitable and increasingly wider application of this law.

5. The Church in Ecuador is not indifferent to the sometimes serious and urgent problems which this country faces and even less does she aspire to any other good than that of the people themselves of whom she is a part and whom she generously serves. Her essential mission, to proclaim the salvation of Christ to all men and to the whole man, makes her a source of inspiration and the promoter of a culture of solidarity and peaceful coexistence in justice, fostering the desire to work together for progress and the common good, without forgetting the attention owed to the poorest and most abandoned. Her many initiatives in such important fields as education, health care and service to the various indigenous or needy communities result from her conviction that evangelization is also “to preach good news to the poor” (Lk 4:18). The Church in Ecuador, asking sometimes for the solidarity of other Churches, also fulfils her particular mission in this way, while at the same time she contributes from her own identity and autonomy to the good of the Ecuadorean people and nation.

6. Mr Ambassador, before bringing this meeting to a close, I express the assurance of my esteem and support, together with my best wishes, that the important mission you are beginning today will be fruitful for Ecuador, and that your stay in this city, which is not new to you, will be pleasant and beneficial.

As I ask you once again to express my sentiments and hopes to your Government, I invoke God’s Blessing upon you, your distinguished family and your staff and on the beloved children of the noble Ecuadorean nation.

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