



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II
TO THE NEW AMBASSADOR
OF THE EASTERN REPUBLIC OF URUGUAY
TO THE HOLY SEE***

Monday, 25 September 2000

Mr Ambassador,

1. I am truly grateful for the kind words you addressed to me at the presentation of the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay to the Holy See.

I would also like to reciprocate the greetings and sentiments of appreciation which the President of the Republic has wished to convey to me through you, asking you to express to him my best wishes for his lofty mission, as well as my closeness to the Uruguayan people, whom I had the opportunity to meet personally in two unforgettable visits to this beloved South American country. Although it has been some years since then, the experience of what I said at the end of my first visit has endured: "the Pope and the Uruguayans have understood one another perfectly" (*Farewell Address*, 1 April 1987, n. 1). As I did then, today too I would like to repeat my firm conviction that "Uruguay will continue to offer hospitality for initiatives which promote harmony and mutual understanding among the nations of Latin America" (*ibid.*, n. 3), since it is itself fertile ground for dialogue and national peace.

2. This conviction is confirmed by the peaceful and peacemaking vocation of the Uruguayan people, in harmony with the deepest roots of a nation which, as you have said, Mr Ambassador, has forged its personality in Christian values and principles. For this reason the Church, faithful to her evangelizing mission, wishes to be a sign and instrument of reconciliation and peace on every occasion, with the desire to serve the common good, "by every means possible" (*Ecclesia in America*, n. 62), since the internal or external disagreements and differences of a nation risk

becoming violent processes whose only real consequence is a worse aggravation of conflicts and even destruction. In this regard, after certain painful experiences which have wounded your country in the recent past, the ecclesial institutions of Uruguay are always prepared to do their utmost to calm hearts and achieve a just social harmony.

3. The Church's concern for these aspects of the social life of peoples stems from the great esteem she has for the "noble destiny of man and ... [the] element of the divine in him" (*Gaudium et spes*, n. 3), for the human being in his full integrity as a person, whose dignity cannot be subordinated to any other interest, exploited for other ends or violated in the name of any power. Never forget that true peace, as well as the common good, is intimately linked to the cause of justice, both in the context of the internal relations of a local or national community, as well as in the human family as a whole, every day more inclined to building a common history shared by all.

This is why it is also important in the international forums that there be sound agreement between your country and the Holy See, to defend rigorously and promote perseveringly those values which give dignity to human life. Daring work for fundamental human rights, solidarity among the various categories of society and among the earth's peoples, the furtherance of a culture of life and harmony with nature are unavoidable ethical duties for individuals and institutions. However they are also a historical challenge for this generation, a witness of complex processes which at times run the risk of bewildering the people of today, eroding their identity and depriving them of a true meaning of life and a reason for hope.

4. The Church's evangelizing action has always played an important role in Uruguay for its people's welfare, not only because of the good of the Christian proclamation itself or the many activities of social assistance and human advancement, but also because of her effort to strengthen the institutions on which all human society is founded, such as the family and education. In them the person feels welcome and appreciated, he learns to share and trust in others and develops the meaning of life as a common task in which he must take part, assuming responsibilities and contributing with his own work to building a better future for all. These are contexts which affect the essence of the common good and in which the responsibility of the public authorities, as well as the pastoral concern of the Church, converge. Thus they are also privileged fields in which good understanding and collaboration must be closer, with complete respect for specific competencies and with the firm conviction that any initiative in these matters must be subordinate to the fundamental and primary right of the family, which must be recognized and supported with effective measures, so that it can maintain its natural configuration and exercise its right to educate children.

5. Mr Ambassador, you are beginning your mission in a very special year for Christians of the whole world, the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, the anniversary of the Incarnation of Jesus. It is an event which is being lived with great intensity in Rome, precisely because the message of the Holy Year has very deeply permeated the hearts of people throughout the world. In Rome, the

fervour of the Uruguayans has also been strongly felt, especially through the national pilgrimage which I had the pleasure to receive and to greet in St Peter's Square on 7 May last. I am pleased to know that the Jubilee experience is also being lived intensely in the Uruguayan Dioceses, and that the Fourth National Eucharistic Congress will be held in Colonia del Sacramento in October. All this is a demonstration of the faith of so many of Uruguay's children, and of its desire for a new millennium imbued with the grace which God pours out on men and women in abundance. Once again, I express my affection, my remembrance in prayer and my Blessing to them, who have perpetuated the memory of my stay in their country with a special monument in the Plaza Tres Cruces in Montevideo.

6. Mr Ambassador, I extend my cordial welcome to you and to your distinguished family, as I offer you my best wishes that your stay in Rome will be very pleasant, and that the diplomatic mission entrusted to you will be highly beneficial for the good of the beloved Uruguayan nation. I ask Our Lady of the Thirty-Three, so widely venerated by all your country's faithful, to continue to bless the efforts of the authorities and citizens, so that Uruguay will always walk on paths of spiritual and material progress, in an atmosphere of harmony and social peace.

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