



The Holy See

*Discours à l'Ambassadeur du BRÉSIL,
S.E.M. José Jobim**

Jeudi 14 novembre 1968

Mr. Ambassador,

It is a joy for Us to bid Your Excellency welcome. You come here to continue the fine tradition dear to the great Brazilian nation of having a permanent Representative to the Holy See. We have known personally several of those who have preceded you in this office, all persons of great merit and distinction. The noble words with which you have just inaugurated your mission make Us confident that the latter will be carried out, like that of your predecessors, in a spirit of perfect mutual understanding and very cordial collaboration.

If Our stay in your country – to which you kindly referred – was too short for Us to acquire as complete a direct knowledge of it as We should have liked, We can at least assure you that We have nothing but sentiments of esteem and sympathy for it. By its extent, its population, the number of its dioceses – not to mention its future developments, which can already be foreseen – Brazil appears to Us as one of the greatest Catholic countries in the world; a country which, thanks to the way it is developing its institutions, thanks to its rapid progress in the fields of agriculture and industry, has a high-ranking place in the world, and in Latin America especially.

The Holy See particularly appreciates the efforts being made by the Brazilian Authorities in favour of social progress, popular education, and a better distribution of the resources of the country. Some people are sometimes surprised, even today, by this interest of the Church in questions which, in themselves, come under the competency rather of the temporal Authorities. It is true that the Church has a mission that is above all religious and moral: a mission that she tries to carry out to the best of her ability, in freedom and in loyalty to the State. But it is no less true that she is a mother, and that, in this capacity, she exercises a spiritual motherhood over her children, which forbids her to be indifferent to the great necessities of the poorest among them.

And thus social questions, by their human side and by their connection with the requirements of justice, oblige the Church to take an interest in the welfare of peoples, to spread knowledge of her social doctrine, to lend her support to the civilizing and educational action of the temporal Authorities, and to encourage the great and legitimate aspirations of the less favoured categories: in a word to support all the good causes of human progress. This is what was authoritatively expressed recently by the conciliar Constitution on 'the Church in the modern world'. This is what We reaffirmed, from a point of view more particularly directed towards the problems raised by the developing countries, in Our Encyclical *Populorum progressio*.

The action of the Church in this field is, of course, exercised on her own plane and in her own spirit. She does not encourage violent solutions, as We again proclaimed at Bogotá recently; she refuses solidarity with revolutionary expressions: this would be a betrayal of the spirit of Christ who, for the redemption of men, shed his own blood and not that of others. But she equally refuses solidarity with abuses, with and collective selfishness, with unjust oppression. The whole of her action aims at invigorating the moral forces of individuals and groups, at promoting their education, and the elevation of their human and Christian value. In this way she prepares them to cope with the desired and necessary social transformations in a positive way, in collaboration and peace.

It is in this way, too, it seems to Us, that the Brazilian people envisages its future, and it gave Us pleasure to hear you state just now that it "aspires with all its might to progress and social justice in its tradition of Catholic life". We greet this perspective with joy, forming the warmest wishes that the Catholic faith of your great, noble nation will be able to express itself better and better in authentic, modern achievements, worthy of its traditions and rich in beneficial fruits for all its children.

It is with these sentiments that We receive from your hands the Letters that accredit you to Us as Ambassador, and that, addressing a deferential greeting to the Head of the Brazilian State and his Government, We invoke the abundance of divine blessings on Your Excellency, and your family, and on the happy fulfilment of your mission to the Holy See.

*ORa n.35 p.2.