



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO H.E. MR. MANUEL ROBERTO LÓPEZ BARRERA,
NEW AMBASSADOR OF EL SALVADOR TO THE HOLY SEE***

Monday, 18 October 2010

Mr Ambassador,

I welcome you today with great pleasure at this solemn act of the presentation of the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of El Salvador to the Holy See, and I thank you for the cordial sentiments you have expressed on behalf of the Government and the beloved people of El Salvador. I reciprocate this sensitive attention and ask you kindly to convey my respectful greeting to H.E. Mr Mauricio Funes Cartagena, President of the Republic. Please assure him that the Apostolic See willingly contributes to the path of dialogue and peaceful coexistence on which the Authorities of your country have set out, in such a way that every Salvadorian may consider the fatherland as an authentic welcoming home that offers him the possibility of living in it peacefully.

Thus the reinforcement of internal harmony will promote the good of the nation. This will help it to retain its important place throughout Central America, where it is essential that voices inviting mutual understanding and generous cooperation be heard, in the name of just progress and of the stability of the International Community.

With your ongoing dedication to the mission you are beginning today, Your Excellency, the Authorities of your country have wished to enhance the prestige of the Diplomatic Representation of El Salvador to the Holy See in harmony with the sentiments of the majority of your fellow citizens, who profess profound veneration for and filial devotion to the Successor of St Peter. Your illustrious personal gifts, Your Excellency — your faith as well as your vast experience in various fields of teaching, of public administration and of social life — are the best guarantee of success in your work of strengthening the fruitful and continuous relations that your country has maintained

for some time with the Holy See.

These close bonds that unite the faithful of El Salvador to the Chair of the Prince of the Apostles express a very noble tradition and it has been impossible to separate them from the history and customs of this blessed land since the time of the arrival there of the sons of St Dominic and of St Francis. The Catholic faith ploughed a fertile furrow in El Salvador. It inspired the very name of this Central American Nation and a wealth of famous artistic monuments. It also created beneficial initiatives for health care, education and social assistance and likewise promoted the innumerable personal, family and social virtues inherent in the Christian state. This patrimony of values, fostered with the Gospel leaven, is the glorious hallmark that Salvadorians have received as a legacy, a treasure of wisdom, which they must foster and consolidate in a just and orderly manner today, so as to subsequently draw enough moral energy to plan a luminous future.

The Church in El Salvador, with its specific competence, with independence and freedom, endeavours to serve and promote the common good in all its dimensions. It also seeks to encourage the conditions that permit the integral development of men and women, thereby imbuing the social context with the light that shines from her vocation to renew the world.

Evangelizing and bearing witness to love of God and to all people, without exception, becomes an effective means of eradicating poverty and giving a vigorous impetus to combating violence, impunity and drug trafficking which are causing such great harm, especially among the young. By contributing as far as possible to caring for the sick and the elderly and for rebuilding the regions devastated by natural catastrophes, the Church wishes to follow the example of her Divine Founder, who does not permit her to remain apart from the human person's aspirations and dynamics. He does not allow her to limit herself to looking on with indifference when attention is not given to important requirements such as the fair distribution of wealth, honesty in carrying out public offices, or the independence of tribunals of justice.

Nor does the ecclesial community stop feeling called into question when many lack decent housing or dignified work that permits them to fulfil themselves and to provide for their family; inadequate conditions force them to emigrate from their own country.

Likewise, it would be strange if disciples of Christ were to remain neutral before the aggressive presence of the sects. They seem to offer an easy and comfortable religious response, but in fact undermine the culture and habits that have moulded the Salvadorian identity for centuries; they obscure the beauty of the Gospel message and break the unity of the faithful around their Pastors. The maternal work of the Church, on the other hand, in her constant desire to defend the inviolable dignity of human life from its conception to its natural end — as the Constitution of the country also proclaims — the value of the family founded on the marriage between a man and a woman, and the right of parents to educate their progeny in accordance with their own moral and spiritual convictions, creates a climate in which the true religious spirit is founded, with the courage

to attain ever higher goals of wellbeing and progress, opening the nation to a vast horizon of hope.

It is comforting to see the effort that your country is making to build an ever more harmonious and supportive society, advancing on the path opened by the Agreements signed in 1992 that put an end to the long internal conflict that El Salvador was involved in. It is a land of enormous natural resources that speak eloquently of God and must be carefully preserved and protected in order to consign it in all its luxuriance to the generations to come. Of course, the self-sacrificing and hard-working people of El Salvador, will experience great joy once the peace process is strengthened day by day and the decisions aiming to promote civil security have been reinforced. In this regard I ask the Almighty with fervent trust to offer your fellow citizens the help they need to give up once and for all everything that sparks disputes, replacing enmity with reciprocal understanding and preserving the safety of people and of their possessions.

To bring about this result they must realize that violence achieves nothing and makes everything worse, since it is a dead end, a detestable and inadmissible evil, an enticement that deceives and insults the person and his/her dignity. The aspiration to peace, on the contrary, is what distinguishes every person who is worthy of this name. As a gift of the Divine Saviour, it is also a duty all must cooperate in without hesitation. To do this they must find in the State a staunch champion, which provides opportune juridical, economic and social measures, as well as adequate police and security forces to watch over the well-being of the population within the framework of legality. In the process of overcoming difficulties, they will always find the hands of the Church's children extended, she warmly exhorts them with their testimony as Christ's missionaries and disciples, increasingly to identify with him and to pray him to make every Salvadorian an architect of reconciliation.

I entrust to Our Lady of Peace, heavenly Patroness of El Salvador, the personal, family and public concerns and challenges of your fellow citizens. May she help and protect you too, Mr Ambassador, in the lofty responsibility which you are now beginning and in which you will always be able to count on the diligent solicitude of my collaborators.

At the same time I invoke her motherly protection upon you, upon your esteemed family and upon the personnel of this Diplomatic Mission, and I implore the Almighty to bestow abundant Blessings upon the Republic of El Salvador.