



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO H.E. MR. LUIS DOSITEO TAPIA,
NEW AMBASSADOR OF ECUADOR TO THE HOLY SEE**

Friday, 22 October 2010

Mr Ambassador,

I am pleased to receive from your hands the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Ecuador to the Holy See. In offering you a most cordial welcome, I ask you kindly to pass on the expression of my affection to all the children of this beloved nation. I also thank you for the kind words you have conveyed to me from the Constitutional President of the Republic, the economist H.E. Mr Rafael Correa Delgado, which I reciprocate with pleasure. At the same time I ask you to express my most fervent good wishes for peace and well-being, for himself and for the noble People of Ecuador.

In your country, which I had the joy of visiting in 1978 as Special Envoy of my Venerable Predecessor Pope John Paul II to Ecuador's Third National Marian Congress, the word of Christ was generously scattered and has flourished splendidly. Peaks of outstanding holiness were reached in it, in addition to others that are less well known, though no less meaningful, that are the seal of glory for this beloved Republic. At the same time they highlight all the benefits that Catholic faith can bring to the promotion of all those initiatives that ennoble the person and perfect society.

This was the goal to which the Church in your country aspired and aspires at every moment. In carrying out her special mission the Church seeks no privileges but only wishes to foster all that can contribute to the person's integral development.

In this regard, the ecclesial community, which has seen its joy redoubled with the recent canonical establishment of the Diocese of St Jacinto de Yaguachi, also rejoices to see social harmony encouraged. To this end it supports the efforts that the Ecuadorian Authorities have been making

in recent years to rediscover the foundations of democratic coexistence to reinforce the State of rights and give a fresh impetus to solidarity and brotherhood.

I ask the Most High to extend this luminous horizon of hope to include many new projects and to obtain that appropriate decisions for the common good prevail over party or class interests. May the ethical imperative be the obligatory reference point of every citizen, may riches be fairly distributed and hardships equally shared, so as not to burden only the neediest.

Your presence, Your Excellency, at this solemn ceremony enables me to address my thoughts to your Homeland which the Creator has endowed with formidable natural resources. It has fertile soil, marked by an incomparable alternation of the plateaux of the Andes, snowy peaks and majestic rivers, all of which must be preserved with commitment and probity, since they are reflections of the love and grandeur of God.

This filigree of unusually beautiful scenery is in conformity with the series of qualities that distinguish Ecuadorians, a hospitable and hard-working people that recognizes that there is no just progress or common universal good without the spiritual and moral good of the person, seen in the totality of his soul and body.

Without this indispensable prerequisite the motivations of public life are debilitated and “human rights risk being ignored either because they are robbed of their transcendent foundation or because personal freedom is not acknowledged” (*Caritas in Veritate*, n. 56).

These fundamental values are deeply rooted in the truth of the human being who, created in the image and likeness of God, constitutes in himself the limit of all political power and, at the same time, motivates his service.

In this regard history teaches that disregarding or distorting this truth about the human being often leads to injustices and forms of totalitarianism. When the State is equipped with adequate legislative and juridical instruments so that it may be generously safeguarded and favoured, the regime of freedom and authentic civil participation is consolidated, the social fabric is strengthened and help for the most deprived people is reinforced.

Mr Ambassador, although there have been times of difficulty and anxiety in the past of your beloved nation, so dear to the Pope's heart, they have not diminished the human and Christian virtues of your people. Nor have they diminished the desire to overcome them with sacrifices that recall useful teachings whose ongoing care is entrusted to the people of today with a view to planning a serene and encouraging future.

The Ecuadorian Authorities will render an important service to the country if they increase this outstanding human and spiritual heritage. In it can be found the energy and inspiration to continue

to build the pillars of every human community worthy of this name.

These pillars include the defence of life from its conception to its natural end, religious freedom, the free expression of thought, and also the other civil freedoms. The latter constitute the authentic condition for real social justice. This, in turn, can only be affirmed on the basis of the support and protection, in both juridical and economic terms, of the primary cell of society: which is nothing other than the family based on the matrimonial union of a man and a woman.

Programmes intended to uproot unemployment, violence, impunity, illiteracy, and corruption will also be of fundamental importance. In achieving these praiseworthy goals, the Church's Pastors are aware that they must not intervene in the political debate by proposing practical solutions or imposing their own conduct.

Yet they cannot and must not remain neutral in the face of the great problems or aspirations of the human being. Nor must they be inactive when the time comes to fight for justice. Rather, with due respect for the plurality of legitimate options their role consists in illuminating the minds and wills of the faithful with the Gospel and with the Church's social teaching. Thus they will make responsible decisions for building a more harmonious and well-ordered society.

Your Excellency, one of the important goals established by your fellow-citizens is to obtain an extensive reform of the educational system, from the primary to the university levels.

The Church in Ecuador has a fruitful history in the area of the instruction of children and young people, having carried out her teaching role with special dedication in the Nation's remote, isolated and poor regions. It is right not to overlook this arduous ecclesial labour, an example of healthy collaboration with the State.

Indeed, the Christian community wishes to continue to place at the service of all its vast experience in this field. It is therefore prepared to collaborate in raising the standard of culture, which is a priority challenge for upright human progress. At the same time this requires freedom. Without it education would stop being such. In fact, the deepest identity of school and university does not consist in the mere transmission of useful data and information but responds to the desire to instil in students a love for the truth so that it may lead them toward that personal maturity with which they must exercise their role as protagonists of the country's social, economic and cultural development.

In accepting this challenge, the public Authorities must guarantee the right of parents to raise their children in accordance with their religious convictions and ethical criteria and to found and support scholastic institutions. In this perspective it is also important that the public Authorities respect the specific identity and autonomy of the educational institutions and of the Catholic university, in harmony with the *modus vivendi* signed more than 70 years ago by the Republic of Ecuador and

the Holy See.

On the other hand, by virtue of their educational rights, parents must be able to rely on the fact that freedom of education is also promoted in the scholastic institutions of the State, in which legislation will continue to guarantee religious teaching at school in a curriculum that corresponds with the aims proper to take the school as such.

Mr Ambassador, in concluding this Meeting which begins your mission to strengthen further the already fruitful relations between the Republic of Ecuador and the Holy See, I entrust you, your distinguished family and the staff of this Diplomatic Mission to the loving intercession of Mary Most Holy, under her title of Our Lady of the Presentation of Quinche, the heavenly Patroness of Ecuador.

I implore the Mother of God to accompany all the children of this beautiful land so that they may remember Dr Eugenio de Santacruz y Espejo, their distinguished fellow citizen who, on Independence Day 200 years ago, urged all Ecuadorians to be free and to seek refuge in the Cross. With these sentiments, I implore the One who was nailed to it to protect and bless all your fellow citizens.

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