



The Holy See

*Discours à l'Ambassadeur d'ESPAGNE,
S.E.M. Gonzalo PUENTE OJEA**

16 novembre 1985

1. As you present your Letters of credence as Spanish Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Holy See, it is my pleasure to cordially welcome you and to thank you for the sentiments of support and union which you have – offered me on behalf of His Majesty, King Juan Carlos 1. I would ask you straightaway to pass on my best wishes to His Majesty along with the assurance of my fervent prayer to the Almighty for the spiritual welfare of the much loved Spanish nation.

You come to represent at the See of Peter a nation which down through the centuries has made itself known as Catholic as we can see from what we might call a triple bond or tradition.

The historical bond: the Iberian Peninsula was one of the first lands to accept the Good News of salvation. Your Christian community finds great honour in affirming its apostolic roots, proclaiming that Saint Paul trod upon its soil and taking St James the Apostle as your patron and protector whom you have venerated from time immemorial. From its position as an independent state Spain has maintained very close links with this Apostolic See.

The religious bond: the Spanish people have made of the Catholic Faith an essential element of the spirit of Spain, something which the Holy See, it is my pleasure to gives inspiration to their moral virtues and gives shape to their very institutions.

The missionary bond: The vitality of the Christian community in your country has spread the light of the Gospel throughout the world through the generous and unselfish missionary endeavour of so many beloved sons who thereby enriched the whole Church with the abundant fruits of new peoples reborn to eternal life through the Faith.

This is the bond of a glorious past which has stamped the very being of that noble nation throughout history and which still in our own times is in full evidence, as I was able to appreciate during my pastoral visits to every part of the nation. Those were unforgettable days of faith and hope, the expression of a religious way of living which is very profound.

2. In the deferential words which you addressed to me you wished to allude to the contribution which this Apostolic See has made to civilization, to culture and to the rights of all individuals and people; and moreover, to the communication to the whole world of the values which are deeply rooted in the Christian vision of life.

The Church, faithful to the command of its Divine Founder, makes a full commitment to the noble cause of serving the integral well-being of mankind and of all nations, in conformity with that which is her proper mission and which urges her to carry on her ministry, overcoming all worldly and particular interests. As we read in the Constitution *Gaudium et spes* from the Second Vatican Council, «the Church, by reason of its universality can create a close bond between the different nations and communities of men and women as long as these have confidence in her and effectively recognize her true freedom for accomplishing this mission (n. 42).

In her own field, the Church, with the autonomy and independence which are rightfully hers, anxiously pursues everything which contributes to the greater good of the human person and of social groups, beginning with the family, the basic cell of society. In this regard it is not superfluous to point out that in the legal ordering of the activities of individuals and of groups by the public authority «the rights of power can only be understood on the basis of respect for the objective and inviolable rights of the human person» (*Redemptor hominis*, n. 17); This sacredness of the person and his dignity must guide the relations between individuals and groups, so that in this way legitimate rights may be cared for and society may enjoy harmony and stability.

3. On the level of the international community, the Holy See will not spare any effort in continuing to make its own special contribution towards a better understanding between nations, giving effect to the moral values which bring people closer together and allow them to overcome the barriers and divisions which make a proper understanding and effective solidarity between the members of the human family so difficult.

Mr. Ambassador, I assure you of my abiding support in the carrying out of the mission which you begin today. I ask you to convey to Their Majesties, the King and Queen, to the Government and its authorities, my respectful good wishes. At the same time I implore abundant and special graces from on High upon the dearly beloved people of Spain.

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