



The Holy See

***DISCURSO DEL SANTO PADRE JUAN PABLO II
AL SEÑOR RAMÓN ARTURO CÁCERES RODRÍGUEZ,,
NUEVO EMBAJADOR DE LA REPÚBLICA DOMINICANA
ANTE LA SANTA SEDE****

Lunes 18 de junio de 1990

Mister Ambassador,

It is a cause of satisfaction for me to receive Your Excellency here today as you begin your mission as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Dominican Republic to the Holy See with the presentation of your Letters of credence.

First of all I thank you for the deferential greeting from the President of the Republic, as well as for the delicate expressions with which you spoke about this Apostolic See: they bear witness in themselves to the sincere sentiments of the noble Dominican people.

1. Your land, where five centuries ago Christ's cross was planted, thus beginning the evangelization of that great continent, was the initial stop during my first apostolic visit in 1979. With it I began a long pilgrimage of faith which has led me, as a messenger of the Gospel and Successor of Peter, to visit so many Churches spread out through all the world to thus confirm the brethren in this same faith (cf. Lk 22:32), in obedience to the Lord's command.

In your kind words, Your Excellency referred to the great work of evangelization of the New World, the fifth centenary of which we are preparing with a novena of years to celebrate; The Lord granted me the grace to begin it precisely in the city of Santo Domingo, the gateway to the Americas.

That unparalleled event concerns not only the life of Latin America, but it also has deep repercussions in the universal Church. In fact, the process of evangelization by the first

missionaries, which was exemplary for its selfless spiritual and social work and which in these five centuries has passed through various stages of Church and socio-political life, must continue to project itself towards the future, keeping in mind the changing situations of persons and peoples in the flux of history.

Thus the Church's celebration of the fifth centenary must not be limited to a mere commemoration of the past, but rather must be a fundamental call to all to keep proclaiming – as the Second Vatican Council reminds us – that «in Jesus Christ, Son of God made man, dead and risen, salvation is offered to all people by a gift of God's grace and mercy» (Const. Lumen Gentium, 27).

2. True evangelization, then, cannot remain only on the level of simple proclamation of the salvific message, but rather has to make the spirit of the Beatitudes penetrate into the daily relationships of people with one another and with God. In this way that spirit can really have an influence on current realities, on criteria for judgment, on social values, on directions of thought, on principles which prompt behaviour and on models for living; that is to say, on the entire cultural process of a people.

In this sense, the Catholic Church, when she preaches the salvific message which comes from God, inevitably defends the cause of mankind and human dignity. The Dominican Church has acted in this way and thus will she continue to act, since her pastoral concern has been and is that of serving everyone generously and selflessly, without distinction of race, class or education, since in this hard task of bringing about the complete liberation of the human being, as was said in the General Conference of the Latin American Bishops at Puebla, she wishes to make use only of «evangelical means... and not resort to violence of any sort, or to the dialectics of class struggle» (Puebla, 486).

3. The principal motivation which five centuries ago motivated the first evangelizers who set foot on that dear land is this: to help people come to know the Good News as a saving message which transcends every form of special interest or selfishness. And the Dominican People who are traditionally religious, have seen in Christ's cross the most sublime fulfillment of the human being. For that reason the Christian faith – as Your Excellency notes – forms part of the roots of Dominican culture, as its representations in the national symbols also show. Thus in face of the challenge of the current moment, that local Church with its hierarchy in the lead wishes to collaborate through a Gospel witness with the various civil institutions so that the most beloved sons and daughters of the Dominican Republic, along with a progressive growth in their Christian life, may also come to achieve greater social well-being as a result of solidarity and justice.

So that these sentiments I am feeling may become a comforting reality in your country; I implore for the dear Dominican people, for its leaders, and especially for Your Excellency and your distinguished family and co-workers God's constant protection, while at the same time I express my best wishes for the successful accomplishment of the mission which has been entrusted to

you.

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