



The Holy See

*Discours au Président de la République de BOLIVIE,
S.E.M. Jaime Paz ZAMORA**

22 novembre 1991

Mr. President,

1. It gives me great satisfaction to have this meeting with the Chief Executive of Bolivia and the senior officials of his Government, and I am very happy to extend my cordial welcome. Your visit to the Holy See is a happy occasion which signifies a reaffirmation of the close ties which exist between this See and the noble Bolivian nation, and it allows me to express again in your presence the sincere affection I have for each and every one of your citizens, whom I had the pleasure of visiting three years ago. In this regard, I recall the cherished celebrations of faith and hope which took place in La Paz, Cochabamba, Oruro, Sucre, Santa Cruz, Tarija and Trinidad, where I was able to appreciate the authentic values of the Bolivian soul: its human warmth, hospitality, enthusiasm as well as the longing for justice and peaceful coexistence of a people who feel united by the strong bonds of the Catholic faith and an ancient culture.

2. The name of Bolivia brings to mind a glorious civilization that forms an undeniable part of your historical identity. Certainly the current circumstances which your country is living through raise a whole series of challenges which must be faced with hope and a spirit of solidarity. In this regard, I recall the words which I addressed in Santa Cruz to the leaders of Bolivia and the representatives of the world of culture: «Your challenge should have as its common objective: to serve the people of Bolivia in their concrete pressing needs today, and to provide for those of tomorrow; to fight against poverty and hunger, unemployment and ignorance with intelligence, hard work, responsibility, and constant and honest administration, to transform natural resources into goods and services useful to the Bolivians – to all Bolivians, without the unjust differences that violate our status as brothers and sisters, children of the same Father and co-sharers in the gifts that the Creator placed in the hands of all» (Santa Cruz 12 May 1988, n. 5).

Throughout their history, Mr President, the noble people of your country have made their own the Christian values which inspired their life and customs. Therefore, Christians are now called to a greater awareness of their own responsibilities and, concerning God and their civic duties, they must be committed with renewed enthusiasm to building a more just, fraternal and participatory society. It is precisely in this area that we find the important role that spiritual values must play in transforming the person from within and motivating him to work for greater social justice, greater respect for the dignity of human beings and their rights, and more fraternal relations where dialogue prevails and understanding curbs the temptation to discord and conflict.

3. The economic crisis and the problem of foreign debt are among the factors which impede the realization of conditions allowing for a more adequate response to the legitimate aspirations which so many Bolivians have for greater prosperity and development. On repeated occasions the Church has advocated the search for solutions permitting short-term and long term measures to be undertaken in order to realize an economic system in which criteria of justice, equity and solidarity prevail. The social implications of this problem have acquired global dimensions, and poor people cannot pay the intolerable social costs, thereby sacrificing their right to development. Dialogue among nations is indispensable for obtaining equitable agreements in which not everything is subject to an economy governed solely by the laws of the marketplace, without soul or moral criteria. On this point, obviously, international solidarity is urgently needed to achieve the integral development of «every human being and all human beings» (*Populorum progressio*, n. 14).

4. To realize the ideals of solidarity and to attain the development objectives for which Bolivians long, the joint effort of all citizens in promoting the common good is indispensable. However, everyone must also have the firm conviction that there is no true progress without regard for the whole truth about the human person and respect for moral principles. In fact, for building a more just and fraternal society the Christian conception of life and the moral teaching of the Church must inspire the behaviour of individuals and the community. The Bolivian Episcopate, motivated by pastoral concern, has repeated on numerous occasions the need to join forces together in solidarity to overcome the difficulties which impede the will to build a community which is based on the search for truth, the love of justice, the vocation to freedom; however, these efforts will be in vain if they are not inspired by spiritual and transcendent values. I can assure you, Mr. President, that the Church in Bolivia, faithful to the command of her divine Founder, will never tire of fulfilling her vocation of serving the human person, a citizen and child of God.

5. Your presence in Rome coincides with the Symposium organized by the Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to Health-Care Workers on the topic of «Drugs and alcoholism against life», in which Your Excellency has agreed to participate. As I had occasion to state during my pastoral visit to your country: «The drug trade has turned into an authentic trafficking of freedom, inasmuch as it brings with it the most terrible form of slavery and sows your land with corruption and death. For this reason, there is an urgent need not only to protect youth from taking drugs, but also to

fight against the trade itself, as we are dealing with an activity that is despicable in every way» (Homily, 13 May 1988, n. 9). As free persons whom Christ has called to live in freedom, we must struggle with determination against this new form of slavery which has subjugated so many people in many parts of the world.

My message today is meant to encourage you to continue taking the path of achievement, effort and confidence in God. The Christian principles which have shaped the life of the Bolivian nation throughout its history must inspire a lively hope and a new dynamism which will enable your country to take its place in the community of nations.

In conclusion, Mr. President, I want to repeat my deep gratitude for this visit. In your person I pay homage to Bolivia as I invoke the blessings of God upon all its sons and daughters.

**L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English n. 48 p.9.*

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