



The Holy See

***DISCURSO DEL SANTO PADRE JUAN PABLO II
AL SEÑOR ENRIQUE OLIVARES SANTANA,
PRIMER EMBAJADOR DE MÉXICO ANTE LA SANTA SEDE****

Sábado 28 de noviembre de 1992

Mr. Ambassador,

With great pleasure I accept the Letters accrediting you as the first Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United Mexican States to the Holy See. In offering you my cordial welcome to this act of presentation. I am pleased once again to state in your presence the deep affection which I have for all the sons and daughters of that noble nation. I am sincerely grateful for the deferential greeting which the President, Mr Carlos Salinas de Gortari, wished to express to me through you, and I ask you to be so kind as to express to him my best wishes for peace and prosperity, together with the assurances of my prayer to the Most High to assist him in his mission at the service of all Mexicans.

1. The establishment of diplomatic relations between Mexico and the Holy See is an important milestone in the process of open and constructive dialogue established in recent years, one which the Mexican Episcopate described as the «start of a new phase in the history of the Church in Mexico» (Declaration of the Mexican Episcopal Conference on the occasion of the Constitutional reform 25 December 1991). I express fervent wishes that the new climate of faithful cooperation and understanding between Church and State may yield abundant fruits of fraternal harmony and increasing social and spiritual progress for the good of all the beloved sons and daughters of your country.

2. You come to the See of Peter to represent a nation which has been characterized by its Catholic nature, as can be seen from its historical inheritance and the values which inspire its very identity, so deeply rooted in a Christian vision of life. Your reference to my pastoral visits to Mexico in 1979 and 1990 bring to mind the memorable days of faith and hope during which I was able to

appreciate the most genuine values of the Mexican spirit which inspire the cultural basis, judgmental criteria and norms of behaviour of a people born under the sign of the cross of Christ and encouraged by the presence of Our Lady of Guadalupe, who for almost 500 years has shaped this very special relationship between Mexicans and the Catholic Church.

By virtue of its Christian roots and the moral values which have shaped its national identity through history, Mexico can contribute significantly to the noble task of strengthening among the nations the bases of peaceful coexistence and solidarity marked by justice and mutual respect, always having as its point of reference a correct concept of the human person and his transcendent destiny. Indeed, as the Second Vatican Council affirms, «faith throws a new light on all things and makes known the full ideal which God has set for man, thus guiding the mind towards solutions that are fully human» (Gaudium et spes, n. 11).

3. The important changes which have come about in international political life in recent years, Mr. Ambassador, demand of everyone a renewed effort on behalf of the supreme values of peace and harmony among peoples. These changes are affecting all countries, including Mexico, and truly challenge them to assume their own identity in order better to adapt to the demands of the times and become more fully and effectively integrated in the various levels of participation in international life.

We are following with particular interest the role which Mexico is playing on behalf of a closer cooperation of solidarity among the countries of the American continent. Its special position where North meets South opens it up to hopeful prospects of exchange and progress in which, balancing the legitimate protection of national interests with those of other peoples, is helping to find ways to solve the most urgent problems facing many countries of your continent's Centre and South.

Particularly significant in this regard is the Ibero-American Summit of Presidents and Heads of State which took place last year in Guadalajara - followed by the one held this year in Madrid - which highlighted the desire to strengthen the bonds of friendship and cooperation among the Iberian and American nations. In this context I want to recall the words which I spoke during the kind visit of Mr Carlos Salinas de Gortari, President of the Republic, to this Apostolic See: «Many of the present circumstances urgently demand not only that the individual Latin American conflicts and fights be resolved, but also that solid foundations be laid to obtain the desired integration of the peoples whom land, history, faith and culture have united so strongly that you can justifiably say that they constitute a great Latin American family» (Address of 9 July 1991).

4. Today as in times past, the Church with due respect for the autonomy of civil institutions and authorities, will tirelessly continue to encourage those initiatives which serve the cause of mankind greater human dignity and integral progress, always promoting the spiritual and religious dimension of the person in the life of the individual, family and society. The spiritual and religious nature of her mission allows her to perform this service over and above earthly motivation or

partisan interests for, as Vatican II noted «the Church is universal in that she is not committed to any one culture or to any political, economic or social system. Hence she can be a very close bond between the various communities of people and nations, provided they have trust in the Church and guarantee her true freedom to carry out her mission» (Gaudium et spes, n. 42).

Indeed, the Church is called to shed the light of the Gospel on all areas of the life of individuals and society, and she considers it her mission to safeguard the transcendent value of the person. On the other hand, as the same Council recalls, she «is not identified with any political community nor bound by ties to any political system.... Nevertheless, both are devoted to the personal vocation of man, though under different titles» (Gaudium et spes, n. 76). As I pointed out in my meeting with the Bishops of Mexico during my most recent pastoral visit to your country, «it is an easy task to show that many social problems, including political ones, have their root in the moral order, which is the object of the evangelizing and teaching task of the Church. Thus we see that Christian life strengthens the family institution, fosters peaceful coexistence and teaches people to live in solidarity and in freedom according to the demands of justice. It is not a question of undue interference in an area extraneous to her, but, because of the Gospel, she wants to be of service to the whole community, in mutual respect and freedom» (Address to the Mexican Episcopate, 12 May 1990, n. 9).

5. In the context of the new situations and challenges facing us today, it is necessary to foster a consciousness of solidarity, which unites wills and efforts in order to conquer poverty, hunger unemployment and ignorance. As the Church's Magisterium has repeatedly proclaimed it is a question of establishing those living conditions which allow individuals and families, as well as intermediate groups and associations, their total fulfilment and the pursuit of their legitimate desires for integral progress.

In this regard, we must see that initiatives aimed at stimulating economic development always respect the principles of equity in the just distribution of effort and sacrifice among the various social groups. When the future of so many individuals and families is at stake, the enactment of economic restructuring must be conducted with the essential mark of social justice and solidarity, each one sharing in the economic and social costs, which it requires. In a particular way, it is the role of the public authorities to make sure that the least protected groups are properly cared for so that they may do not continue to be excluded from the dynamism of growth and that, on the contrary they may participate in the common task of building a more just, fraternal and welcoming society. «For the fulfilment of the ideals of solidarity among Mexicans it is necessary that the society it wants to build be stamped with the seal of moral and transcendent values, because they represent the strongest source of social cohesion» (Address to the President of Mexico, 9 July 1991).

Mr. Ambassador, before closing this meeting, I want to express to you the assurances of my esteem and support, together with my best wishes that the important mission with which you have

been entrusted may bear fruit for the good of your country. I ask you to convey these sentiments and hopes to the President of the Republic and Mexico's worthy authorities. Through the intercession of Our Lady of Guadalupe, patroness of the Mexican nation, I offer my prayer to the Almighty that he may always assist with his gifts you, your family, your co-workers, the authorities of your noble nation, as well as the beloved Mexican people, always so close to the Pope's heart.

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