



The Holy See

***DISCURSO DEL SANTO PADRE JUAN PABLO II
AL SEÑOR JOSÉ MAURICIO RODRÍGUEZ WEVER
NUEVO EMBAJADOR DE GUATEMALA ANTE LA SANTA SEDE****

Jueves 21 de diciembre de 1995

This solemn act, taking place precisely when I am preparing another visit to your country in the near future, vividly reminds me of the moving celebrations at which I had the opportunity to preside during my Pastoral Visit in 1983. On that memorable occasion I could see how the history and culture of Guatemala were imbued with the principles and values flowing from the Gospel.

2. Mr. Ambassador, your presence and your words show respect for and recognition of the Church's specific mission in this nation, which, in the midst of many complex challenges, teaches and works under the wise and prudent guidance of her Bishops, so that moral values and a Christian concept of life may inspire all those who are in some way or another seek to defend the dignity and cause of man who is «the way for the Church» (Redemptor hominis, n. 14).

You referred in particular to Catholic social doctrine. «The teaching and spreading of her social doctrine are part of the Church's evangelizing mission» (Sollicitudo rei socialis, n. 41), in which human advancement has a prominent place, since evangelization strives for the person's total liberation (cf. Opening Address to the Fourth General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate, 12 October, 1992, n. 13; L'Osservatore Romano English edition, 21 October 1992, p. 8).

3. For almost five centuries the Church has been present in Guatemala guiding the life of its peoples on their journey to God. Sensitive to men's deepest needs, she carries out her pastoral work, enlightening with her teaching and her spiritual and moral principles the various areas of society. In accordance with her own mission, she is prepared to continue to collaborate with the various public authorities so that the citizens of your nation may find a suitable response to the challenges of the present time.

The Church in Guatemala is celebrating a well-known anniversary, beloved not only in this nation

but in all Central America: the fourth centenary of the devotion to the Holy Christ of Esquipulas. Pilgrims prostrate themselves at the foot of the «Black Christ», as those devoted to the sacred image affectionately call it, expressing their joys and hopes, their sorrows and anguish, and imploring blessings from the Most High.

As I already pointed out to the Bishops of Guatemala during their last *ad limina* visit, it is essential that this celebration «foster a deep spiritual renewal, based on a more active and conscious participation in liturgical and sacramental life, and an impetus in the Dioceses and parishes, in the communities and apostolic movements, and an invigorating incentive in the tasks of the new evangelization» (Address, 4 March 1994: *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, 16 March 1994, n. 3).

4. The name «Esquipulas» also calls to mind the extensive and hard-working process towards a stable and lasting peace, since on this site a place of dialogue was created for seeking a political solution through negotiation to the serious problem of confrontation. Furthermore, peace is the great aspiration of your people in these times when social harmony has been disturbed by an almost endemic violence during the 35 years of persistent armed conflict between the children of Guatemala, a conflict which has cut short the lives of so many. As your Bishops clearly pointed out, "to achieve a firm and lasting peace has today become the strongest aspiration burgeoning in the hearts of all Guatemalans» (Pastoral Letter ¡Urge alcanzar la verdadera paz!, n. 1). Today's dialogue between the parties concerned is presented as the necessary way to reconcile the various political projects with ethical principles, and thus attain the longed-for peace. In this way it will be possible to build a better future for the nation, leaving all forms of discord and fratricidal conflict behind and overcoming every restriction of personal freedoms and that of social groups, which undermines human rights and the common welfare of peoples (cf. *Gaudium et spes*, n. 75).

The indispensable conditions for persevering on this path are an education which encourages respect for life and human dignity, as well as political directives that guarantee social harmony, the right to work and which above all promote justice and peace. In this way it will be possible to urge citizens to commit themselves to defending indisputable values such as truth, freedom, mutual understanding and solidarity.

5. As you are preparing to begin the lofty function for which you have been appointed, I would like to offer you my best wishes for the successful and fruitful outcome of your mission to this Apostolic See, ever desirous that good relations with Guatemala be preserved and constantly strengthened. As I ask you to convey my sentiments and hopes to the President of the Republic, his Government, the authorities and the beloved Guatemalan people, I assure you of my prayers to the Almighty that, through the intercession of Our Lady of the Assumption, he may always assist with his gifts you and your distinguished family, your co-workers, and the Government and citizens of your noble country, whom I always remember with particular affection and whom I will very shortly have the opportunity to visit again as an apostle of Jesus Christ and a pilgrim of

reconciliation and peace.

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