



The Holy See

*Address to the President of URUGUAY,
H.E.Mr. Julio María SANGUINETTI**

25 May 1996

1. It gives me great pleasure today to receive the President of the Oriental Republic of Uruguay, accompanied by his distinguished entourage. In expressing my deep gratitude to you for this second visit, which highlights your esteem for the Apostolic See, I am pleased to offer you a respectful greeting together with my most cordial welcome. Your presence here is meant not only to express your personal sentiments, but also to reflect the good climate in the collaborative relationship between the local Church and the State for the good of the Uruguayan people.

This meeting reminds me of the two Pastoral Visits I made to your nation, when I was able to experience the moral and cultural values of Uruguayans as well as their Christian roots since «your nation was born Christian. Your heroes found inspiration in the Gospel. Your culture is filled with elements of the Catholic faith» (Address, 7 May 1988, n. 2).

2. I have followed with keen interest the events in your country's political and social life, in which a series of significant changes should be recognized and pointed out. Outstanding among them are the steps which have been taken to face the challenges of a peaceful and harmonious coexistence for all based on an ever more just society. For this reason you have undertaken initiatives aimed at reforming the educational and social welfare systems as well as at remedying the growing public insecurity due to new forms of organized crime. The Holy See also follows closely the efforts of Uruguayan leaders to promote suitable economic and social development at this difficult historical moment with measures to improve the citizens' living standards, seeking solutions, in the first place, to the problem of unemployment. It is desirable that these measures be always inspired by ethical principles, thus ensuring that the indispensable sacrifices to be made by all are equitable and that it is not the poorest who are burdened with the consequences of the necessary readjustments, but that its costs are shared in a spirit of solidarity that enables all to live a dignified life.

3. In this context, it is desirable to reinforce constantly the values essential to social coexistence, such as respect for the truth, the firm commitment to justice, the capacity for dialogue and participation at all levels. It is a question of promoting living conditions which permit individuals and families to fulfil themselves and to achieve their legitimate aspirations. In her own field, the Church collaborates resolutely in encouraging this integral development, always urging that moral values and the Christian concept of life continue to provide the essential inspiration for all who work for the good of individuals, families and society.

Of particular importance is the subject of the defence of life, that is, the respect which all should have for the «sacred value of human life from its very beginning until its end» and the affirmation of the «right of every human being to have this primary good respected to the highest degree», since «upon the recognition of this right, every human community and the political community itself are founded» (Evangelium vitae, n. 2). At the same time, legislation which safeguards the right to life should be accompanied by adequate measures for social assistance to protect all who are preparing to accept a new life, and to remove any temptation to attack this life.

4. The Holy See cannot fail to support the efforts being made to further the process of Latin American integration, since to foster solidarity and good understanding is a task for generous collaboration in order to reinforce bonds of fraternity among all men and, in particular, among those who make up the great family of Latin America. In this regard, I know that Uruguay is taking positive steps to consolidate the economic and social structures which will open new ways of progress and development for the local peoples, such as MERCOSUR. Its very geographical location offers your country significant opportunities to contribute to it.

It is also necessary to point out Uruguay's firm determination to be a peacemaker. Its authorities have many times spared no effort or good offices to resolve conflicts breaking out between several sister nations, just as on various occasions Uruguayan armed forces have taken part in United Nations' peacekeeping operations. Since peace is a gift of God but which men must earn by their deeds, the Church firmly supports all efforts made to consolidate peace between peoples and nations, encouraging those who are committed to this task with the words of her Lord: «Blessed are the peacemakers" (Mt 5:9).

5. I would like to assure you, Mr. President, of the Church's firm intention to continue to co operate with the authorities and the various public institutions in promoting the great causes of man, as a citizen and child of God (cf. Gaudium et spes, n. 76). It is to be hoped that constructive dialogue between the civil authorities and the Pastors of the Church in your nation will strengthen the relations between the two institutions, and that the State and the other public authorities will offer concrete and effective collaboration in the important work that the Church in Uruguay is undertaking in Catholic educational centres. Among those I would like to mention the Catholic University of Damaso Antonio Larranaga, oriented to training consciences in the true and essential spiritual values. For its part, Bishops, priests and religious communities will pursue their tireless

work of evangelization, social assistance and education on behalf of society. They are motivated to do this by their vocation of service to all, especially the neediest thereby contributing to the integral advancement of each Uruguayan, and to the promotion of the highest values.

Mr. President, before this meeting' comes to an end I would like to reiterate my sincere appreciation of this friendly visit. I deeply hope that your personal commitment as well as that of your Government will achieve the objectives they have set to promote the modern development of Uruguay on the basis of the ethical values so deeply rooted in the people's religious and cultural traditions. Spiritually prostrate before the image of Our Lady of the Thirty Three Mother and spiritual guide of all Uruguayans, I fervently ask the Almighty to pour out his gifts and blessings on you, Mr. President, on those who assist you in the tasks of government, and on all the beloved children of your noble country.

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