



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. Mr. JORGE SILES SALINAS
AMBASSADOR OF BOLIVIA TO THE HOLY SEE***

Saturday, 20 December 1997

Mr Ambassador,

1. I am pleased to receive you at this audience for the presentation of the Letters of Credence accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Bolivia to the Holy See. I welcome you with joy as you accept the responsibility your Government has wished to entrust to you, in consideration of your personal achievements in the fields of culture and diplomacy, in the desire for continuing and strengthening the good relations that exist between your country and this Apostolic See.

I am grateful for your friendly words, and especially for the greeting from General Hugo Bánzer Suárez, who has recently assumed responsibility as President of the Republic. I appreciate not only the intention of loyal and constructive collaboration expressed in your address, but also the closeness and affection of the Bolivian people for the Holy See and the Pope's person. Today, 10 years after my visit to your beloved country, I reciprocate these noble sentiments of the Bolivians, repeating what I said when I flew over the Shrine of Copacabana: "I still feel as if I [were] among you" (*Radio Message*, 14 May 1988; *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, 20 June 1988, p. 11).

2. At the end of my [Pastoral Visit to your country in 1988](#), I stressed that "the people of Bolivia are making positive achievements in their civic and institutional development" (*Departure from Santa Cruz*, 14 May 1988, n. 4; *ibid.*). I celebrate the continuation of this development in recent years, since the stable organization of peoples is an indispensable premiss for facing with greater hope of success the great challenge of progress in the common good, so that all citizens may live in full accord with their dignity.

It is important to lay a stable foundation for important projects such as the intention to build a better country in which its citizens can achieve those living conditions that allow them full material and spiritual growth. In this regard, it should be remembered that the struggle against marginalization and extreme poverty by one section of the inhabitants requires an appropriate economic policy in which the principles of equity and solidarity are applied. I encourage your country's leaders to be fully committed to achieving these objectives, which are so important for all Bolivian society.

3. The good relations between the Republic of Bolivia and the Holy See reflect a predominantly Catholic nation's appreciation of the Successor of Peter, as well as the pastoral concern which, as Pastor of the whole Church, he feels for every nation. They are also a guarantee for the exercise of the Church's mission in your country, within the framework of cordial collaboration and of authentic respect for their respective roles.

The Church, in her mission of shedding the light of faith on human affairs, helps to build a better society, teaching and promoting those values which neither the individual nor society can reject without denying their own dignity: the value of human life, the source of all rights; recognition of the family as the basic cell of society; religious freedom, education and solidarity, especially for the neediest.

4. The Church in Bolivia has a long history which goes back to the time when the first missionaries penetrated its most remote regions in order to bring the light of the Gospel and to proclaim the greatness of the Christian vocation: to be children of God.

This history is also a great responsibility for a people with a deep-rooted Christian tradition like your country. I am sure that the Bolivian faithful, under the spiritual guidance of their Pastors, will not cease working diligently for the nation's progress, striving to overcome the problems that still exist with a hope that never falters in the face of difficulties and obstacles.

5. I am confident that to solve the principal internal and external problems, the way of dialogue will obtain the desired fruit for the good of the whole Bolivian people. I hope so with all my heart, because dialogue leads to overall harmony and co-operation which are so necessary for overcoming the great challenges this nation must face. In fact, active participation in a common plan makes projects more convincing, the ability to collaborate in them more generous and the commitment to achieving objectives stronger.

Mr Ambassador, at the end of this meeting I once again express my greetings and my welcome to you and your distinguished family, hoping that your work together with your staff on behalf of your country will be fruitful. As I place all these sentiments and hopes at the feet of Our Lady of Copacabana, I invoke abundant blessings from the Most High on the beloved people of Bolivia.à

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