



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. MISS LUVY SALERNI NAVAS
AMBASSADOR OF NICARAGUA
TO THE HOLY SEE***

Monday, 14 September 1998

Your Excellency,

1. I am pleased to offer you a cordial welcome at the presentation of the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Nicaragua to this Apostolic See. On this occasion I would also like to express my gratitude to you for your kind words, which attest to the closeness and loyalty to the Chair of Peter present in the hearts of so many Nicaraguan citizens.

I am also particularly grateful for the respectful greeting you have brought me from President Arnaldo Alemán Lacayo, which I reciprocate, with my best wishes and the assurance of my prayers for the progress and spiritual well-being of all the children of this beloved nation.

2. Madam Ambassador, your words clearly underscore the respect and gratitude for the particular mission of the Church in this nation, which amid many complex challenges, works and teaches under the wise and prudent guidance of her Bishops, so that moral values and the Christian concept of life may inspire those who in one way or another work to defend the dignity and cause of man, which is the “way for the Church” (*Redemptor hominis*, n. 14). For this reason, concern for the social order “is part of the Church’s evangelizing mission” (*Sollicitudo rei socialis*, n. 41), in which human advancement takes priority, because evangelization aims at the total liberation of the person (cf. *Address to the Fourth General Conference of the Latin American Bishops*, n. 13, 12 October 1992; *L’Osservatore Romano* English edition, 21 October 1992, p. 8).

You also mentioned my second Pastoral Visit to your beloved country. In this regard, it gives me deep satisfaction to know that decisive steps are being taken in the work of reconciliation, as well as in the sociopolitical development of institutions and of society itself, thus combatting situations of poverty. Therefore, measures must be undertaken to create

a more just society in which the rights of every citizen are recognized, but which at the same time take into consideration his duty and responsibility to others.

3. For five centuries the Church has been present in Nicaragua, guiding the life of the people on their way to God. Attentive to the deepest human needs, she carries out her pastoral work by shedding the light of her doctrine and spiritual and moral principles on various aspects of society. In accordance with her mission, she is willing to continue working with the various public institutions so that Nicaraguans will find adequate solutions to current problems.

To continue on the path already undertaken, it is indispensable to have an educational programme that encourages respect for human life and dignity, as well as political guidelines which guarantee social harmony, the right to work and which, above all, promote justice and peace. In this way it will be possible to ask citizens to commit themselves to defending such indisputable values as truth, freedom, mutual understanding and solidarity.

4. In many parts of the world, a crisis of values can be observed which affects institutions such as the family, and broader sectors of society such as youth and the complex world of work. In this regard, it is urgent for Nicaraguans to become more aware of their own responsibilities and, before God and in view of their duties as citizens, to continue building a more fraternal and welcoming society. Therefore, the Christian concept of life and the Church's moral teachings and values must be taken into consideration by those who work for the nation.

Above all, one must remember that the human being is the primary goal of development. In the past, this concept was thought of primarily in economic terms; today it is obvious that the development of the person and of the people must be total. This means that social development must take into account the political, economic, ethical and spiritual aspects.

5. A crucial contemporary problem which is becoming increasingly evident in Latin America is the great social inequalities between the rich and poor. In this regard, despite the enormous wealth of the land's natural resources, the data on the number of human groups living in extreme poverty is a cause for grave concern. There is no doubt that these inequalities seriously harm interpersonal relations and social harmony itself, and lead to the deterioration of moral values. They result in the break-up of many family units, the erosion of morals and scant respect for life.

This pressing situation requires that preferential options be made to help restore these values through programmes and joint actions that enable citizens to find dignified, stable employment allowing them to fight the material poverty in which many of them live. It is also necessary to protect the family institution and to ensure that everyone receives at least a basic education, thus overcoming situations of illiteracy, which so degrade human dignity. The various public institutions are thus responsible for intervening on behalf of the family, working to strengthen it by seeking to protect and defend the rights, abilities and duties of its members. Special attention must therefore be paid to society's most vulnerable groups such as women, the elderly and children, because of the particular needs they experience or the discrimination they suffer. In this regard, the Catholic Church is making a significant contribution to the common effort to foster a society more attentive to the needs of its weakest members.

6. As you begin the high office to which you have been appointed, I would like to offer you my most cordial wishes for a happy and fruitful mission to this Apostolic See, which is always pleased to maintain and reinforce its good relations with

Nicaragua. As I ask you kindly to convey my sentiments and hopes to the President of the Republic, to the Government, to the authorities and to the beloved Nicaraguan people, I assure you of my prayers to the Almighty that, through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, he may always help you and your distinguished family, your staff, the leaders and the citizens of your noble country, which I always remember with special affection.

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