



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE NEW AMBASSADOR OF URUGUAY
TO THE HOLY SEE***

Friday, 6 September 2002

Mr Ambassador,

1. I am pleased to receive the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay to the Holy See on this solemn occasion at which I would like to offer you a very cordial welcome.

I also want to express my deep gratitude to you for conveying the President's courteous greetings to me; at the same time, I ask you to express my special closeness to the Uruguayan people whom I commend to the Almighty so that in today's social and economic situation they may find the most suitable solutions to achieve ever higher goals of justice, solidarity and progress in accordance with the Christian spirit that has contributed so much to forging the national identity.

2. The mission your Government has entrusted to you begins at a time when a variety of circumstances are calling for attention, both in the concert of nations as well as in your country. At the beginning of this millennium, new and unexpected troubles seem to be upsetting the balance and progress thought to have been achieved after the turbulent events that marked the last century had been overcome.

In this context, the Church continues to proclaim forcefully the need for expansive and cordial relations between the different nations, thus guaranteeing the appropriate channels for a continuous dialogue which will effectively help solve conflicts and encourage people to join forces to promote concord and, with the collaboration of all, build the common good of society.

In inviting human beings to hope "against all hope" (cf. Rom 4,18), the Christian message

proclaims the Church's confidence in them and in their ability, with God's help, not to yield to difficulties; and at the same time to understand that the progress achieved at any period in history, despite its fascination, is transitory, leaves room for improvement and, in any case, needs to be constantly reaffirmed by individuals and by institutions, so as to guide the noblest aspirations of the human being.

For this reason "the Church knows full well that her message is in harmony with the most secret aspirations of the human heart, since it champions the dignity of man's calling, giving hope once more to those who already despair of their higher destiny" (*Gaudium et spes*, n. 21). On this she bases her mission to contribute to the common good of peoples, collaborating with the civil authorities but within her own province and without wishing to encroach upon the competence of others. It is also her task to promote the values which constitute the soul of a nation and foster democracy, since "as history demonstrates, a democracy without values easily turns into open or thinly disguised totalitarianism" (*Centesimus annus*, n. 46).

3. Recently, there has been an unusually widespread social and economic crisis in Uruguay, which has seriously affected many homes. Although it may be due to complex factors, some of which have their origin outside the country, this situation must nonetheless lead to a calm, realistic reflection on the premises that have caused or favoured it.

In this regard, it is necessary to remember that the social situation is not improved by applying exclusively technical measures. As you pointed out, special care must be taken to foster the values and respect for the ethical dimension of the person, in the family and in society. The authentic progress of peoples requires honesty, austerity, responsibility for the common good, solidarity, a spirit of sacrifice and the culture of work. In this way, it will be easier to ensure an integral development for all the members of the national community so that no Uruguayan will lack the necessary means for fulfilment as a person and as a citizen; nor must it be forgotten that in times of difficulty and crisis, special care must be taken to prevent the plight of those who already suffer from the multiple forms of poverty from worsening.

4. In the field of social assistance for the least privileged the Church "has always been present and active among the needy, offering them material assistance in ways that neither humiliate nor reduce them to mere objects of assistance, but which help them to escape their precarious situation by promoting their dignity as persons" (*ibid.*, n. 49). This is what she has done and continues to do in Uruguay, since her coordination and collaboration with the civil institutions in many areas that promote the citizens' good, such as education, attention to health care or assistance to the marginalized or the deprived, is a way to make an effective contribution to the common good of the entire national community.

At the same time, precisely because of her total respect for the dignity of all human beings, whatever their social status or situation, the Church always defends their inalienable rights, such

as the right to life from its conception to its natural end, the right to be born and to grow up in a family, to found a stable home and openly to profess their religious faith, without obstacles, in public as in private. Indeed, of the person fundamental rights cannot be sacrificed for the sake of other objectives, erroneously considered beneficial since this would attack the true dignity of every human being.

5. Mr Ambassador, at the conclusion of this meeting, I once again offer you my best wishes for the fulfilment of the important mission entrusted to you, so that relations between Uruguay and the Holy See, as you emphasized, may be strengthened and developed, thus reflecting the deep appreciation for the Successor of Peter felt by the Uruguayan people who wanted to perpetuate the memory of the Pope's first visit to this country by cherishing as a national monument the Cross which was at the centre of the altar at which I celebrated the Eucharist.

Please convey my deep gratitude for all this as well as my special closeness and affection to all the dear sons and daughters of Uruguay, for whom I always invoke the motherly protection of Our Lady, the *Virgin de los Treinta y Tres*, as they advance towards a society that is more just, more peaceful and shows greater solidarity.

**L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English n.38 p.8.*

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