



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. MR MARCOS MART ÍNEZ MENDIETA,
NEW AMBASSADOR OF PARAGUAY**

ACCREDITED TO THE HOLY SEE* *Tuesday, 9 December 2003* Mr Ambassador, I receive you with great pleasure at the presentation of the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Paraguay to the Holy See. Please convey to the President, H.E. Mr Nicanor Duarte Frutos, my best wishes and the assurance of my prayers for his important mission, together with my best wishes for the prosperity and spiritual good of all the sons and daughters of the beloved land of Paraguay. I renew what I said to that Nation at the end of my Pastoral Visit: "The Pope is leaving, but he carries you in his heart" (*Farewell Address at Asuncion Airport*, 18 May 1988, n. 5; *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition [ORE], 4 July 1988, p. 9). Your presence here is a favourable opportunity to reaffirm the good relations between Paraguay and the Holy See which are, moreover, founded on the deep Christian roots of the Paraguayan people that are "part of their national soul and treasure of their culture, nourished and strong in order to build a better future in freedom, justice and peace" (*ibid.*). From the very beginning of the evangelization of the American Continent, Christian faith took root in Paraguay and shaped its public life. It is this first patrimony of faith, together with the different expressions of popular piety down the centuries, that the Bishops, with their priests and the different religious communities present in Paraguay, wish to preserve and increase through the New Evangelization. The Church in Paraguay consists of 14 ecclesiastical circumscriptions and a Military Ordinariate. The Pastors work in the particular Churches, continuing to scatter the seed of the Gospel in Paraguayan hearts so that Christian life may bear abundant fruits in the different contexts in which the Church carries out the mission she has received from her divine Founder. Bishops, priests and religious communities continue tirelessly to carry out their tasks of evangelization, social assistance and education for the good of society. They are motivated by their vocation of service to all, excluding no one. Thus, they contribute to the integral advancement of the whole Paraguayan people, and safeguard and spread the supreme values. Furthermore, although the Church's mission is fundamentally religious, it is nevertheless the source of "commitment, direction and vigour to establish and consolidate the community of men according to the law of God" (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 42). On this occasion I would like to assure you, Mr Ambassador, of the constant desire of the Church in Paraguay to continue collaborating with the Authorities and the various public institutions at the service of the great causes of the human being, as a citizen and a child of God (cf. *ibid.*, n. 76). It is hoped that constructive and frequent dialogue between the civil Authorities and the Pastors of the Church will develop relations between the two Institutions. In this respect I would like to recall that "the Church has something to say... about the nature, conditions, requirements and aims of authentic development, and also about the obstacles which stand in its way. In doing so the Church fulfils her mission to evangelize, for she offers her first contribution to the solution of the urgent problem of development when she proclaims the truth about Christ, about herself and about man, applying this truth to a

concrete situation" (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, n. 41). Your country, Mr Ambassador, is made up of noble people, courageous in taming nature and in overcoming every kind of adversity, generous and hospitable. It also has a wealth of indigenous cultures. With this patrimony, it is called to play an ever more active part in the concert of nations, which means constantly improving and adapting the training of its citizens. In this regard, it is hoped that the constant efforts to promote a higher standard of education will succeed in bringing within the reach of all the integral formation of the person and training the new generations to assume their full responsibilities as citizens able to take charge of the nation's progress and effectively achieve the common good. Special care must be dedicated to teaching the true moral and spiritual values and to nurturing an authentic political culture that consolidates and spreads them. These fundamental values must be presented anew, in addition to honesty, austerity, responsibility for the common good, solidarity, a spirit of sacrifice and the culture of work, the capacity for dialogue and participation at every level. They will assure greater development to all the members of the national community. In short, it is a matter of continuing to promote and achieve a standard of living which enables individuals and families, as well as intermediate groups and associations, to reach fulfilment and attain their legitimate aspirations. Mr Ambassador, I am deeply aware of many aspects of this critical period that Paraguay is experiencing. I accompany this complex process with great confidence, recalling that whether a democracy endures or collapses depends on the defence of the values it embodies and promotes, "as history demonstrates a democracy without values easily turns into open or thinly disguised totalitarianism" (*Centesimus Annus*, n. 46). Many challenges must be faced in order to reinforce and consolidate an atmosphere of peace and harmonious coexistence among all, in which the citizens' confidence in the various institutions and public bodies prevails. The latter must keep in mind and promote the common good all the time as their *raison d'être* and the priority aim in all their work, so that government action may be above any private or partisan interest, taking into account that the national good must prevail over personal ambitions and those of each political group. The desire to promote proper development in all areas calls for the adoption of initiatives that truly increase the citizens' quality of life, paying special attention to the sectors of health care, housing and the conditions of labour. These projects must always be inspired by ethical principles that take into account fairness and the necessary contribution of efforts and sacrifices by all. They must aim to serve Paraguayans in their immediate, pressing concrete needs and to anticipate future needs; to fight against poverty tenaciously; to transform the potential resources of nature with hard work and responsibility; to distribute its riches more equitably, reducing inequalities that give rise to marginalization and offend the condition of brothers and sisters, children of the same Father and co-sharers in the gifts that the Creator puts in the hands of all. Before ending this ceremony, I would like to offer you, Mr Ambassador, my best wishes for the success of your mission that begins today. I ask you kindly to convey my sentiments and hopes to the President and the other authorities of the Republic as I invoke upon you, your distinguished family and your collaborators, as well as upon all the children of the noble Paraguayan nation, an abundance of blessings from the Most High, together with the constant motherly intercession of Our Lady of Caacupé, radiant with

light.

**L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English* 53 p.8. © Copyright 2003 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana