



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO H.E. Mr ALFONSO ROBERTO MATTA FAHSEN
AMBASSADOR OF GUATEMALA TO THE HOLY SEE**
Saturday, 6 February 2010

Mr Ambassador,

I am pleased to receive from you the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Guatemala to the Holy See. I welcome you cordially as you begin the lofty responsibility that has been entrusted to you. I also thank you for the kind words and respectful greeting you have conveyed to me from H.E. Mr Álvaro Colom Caballeros, President of Guatemala. Please be kind enough to pass on to him my best wishes for him and for his Government, together with my prayers for your country and its noble people.

Your Excellency, you well know the attention that the Holy See pays to Guatemala, whose history has for centuries been permeated and fruitfully enriched with the wisdom that comes from the Gospel. In fact the Guatemalan people, with the variety of its races and cultures, has deeply rooted faith in God, sincere devotion to Mary Most Holy and faithful love for the Pope and the Church. This reflects the close and fluent relations which your country has long maintained with the Holy See, and which acquired a special importance with the creation of the Apostolic Nunciature in Guatemala. Let us hope that the commemoration of the 75th anniversary in 2011 of this important event will give a new impetus to the cooperation that exists in your Country between the State and the Church, based on respect for and autonomy of the different provinces proper to each one. Let us also hope that progress will be made in loyal and honest dialogue to further the common good of the whole of Guatemalan society, which must pay special attention to the people in greatest need.

In this context, I cannot forget those who are suffering the consequences of climatic phenomena. In your country too they contribute to increasing drought and can lead to the loss of harvests, causing malnutrition and poverty. This extreme situation recently prompted the national

Government to declare a "state of public calamity" and to ask the international community for help. I would like to express my affection and my spiritual closeness to the victims of these grave misfortunes, as well as my gratitude to the institutions in your homeland that are striving with dedication to find solutions to such serious problems. It is also necessary to mention here the magnanimity of the cooperators and volunteers, as well as that of all who seek with their efforts and sacrifices to alleviate suffering, hunger and poverty of so many of their brothers and sisters. I likewise wish to express my gratitude to the different organisms and international relief agencies which are doing their utmost to mitigate famine in vast sectors of the population. I am thinking in particular of the beloved sons and daughters of the Church in Guatemala, the Pastors, religious and faithful who once again are endeavouring to imitate the Gospel model of the Good Samaritan, generously helping those in gravest need.

Guaranteed access to the necessary food is a fundamental right of every person, hence a priority goal. To achieve it, in addition to material resources and technical decisions, men and women are needed who show compassion and solidarity. In setting out to reach this goal they give proof of the love which is a source of life and which every human being needs. Working for this entails promoting and giving dignity to everyone's life and especially to the lives of those who are the most vulnerable and defenceless, such as children. Their physical and psychological health is compromised by a lack of adequate nutrition and they are all too often exposed to work unsuitable for their age or are immersed in tragedies that violate their personal dignity and the rights that derive from it (cf. *Message for World Food Day 2007*, n. 3).

There are important causes of hope, however, represented by the many human and Gospel values cherished in the hearts of your country's citizens; such as love for the family, respect for the elderly, a sense of responsibility and, above all, trust in God who has revealed his Face in Jesus Christ and whom Guatemalans call on in their suffering. From this abundant spiritual patrimony it is possible to draw the necessary strength to combat other factors that damage Guatemala's social fabric. These are drug-trafficking, violence, emigration, insecurity, illiteracy, sects and the loss of moral reference points among the new generations. New solutions must therefore be found for the projects being carried ahead in your nation to safeguard and increase this priceless patrimony. They should be sought "in the light of an integral vision of man, reflecting the different aspects of the human person, contemplated through a lens purified by charity" (*Caritas in Veritate*, n. 32). In this most crucial undertaking, your country's authorities will always be able to count on the solicitous collaboration of the Church in her constant intention to open "new and creative paths" in response to the devastating effects of poverty and to cooperate in the ennoblement of every human being (cf. *Concluding Document of the Fifth General Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops' Conferences*, Aparecida, nn. 380-546).

I would also like to express my gratitude for all that has been done in Guatemala to consolidate the guarantees of a true State of rights. This process must be accompanied by the firm determination, born from personal conversion of heart, to eliminate every form of corruption in the

public institutions and administrations. There must also be determination to reform justice in order to apply laws fairly and to uproot the feeling of impunity in those who exercise any form of violence or violate human rights. This strengthening of democracy and of political stability must be an ongoing task. It is indispensable for progress towards a true, integral development of the person that will have positive reflections in the social sphere, whether it be financial, cultural, political, territorial or religious (cf. *Caritas in Veritate*, n. 41).

In the cultural patrimony of your homeland, in the recent history of the pacification of Guatemalan society and in the formulation of its laws, there are situations that determine the specific identity of its people and can have beneficial effects on the political and social stability of the Central American region. In this regard it is worth mentioning the foresight with which the Constitution of Guatemala guarantees the legal defence and protection of human life, from conception until natural death. I urge all the social agents of your country, especially the people's representatives in the legislative institutions, to preserve and reinforce this fundamental element of the "culture of life" which will undoubtedly contribute to the growth of the Guatemalans' moral patrimony.

Mr Ambassador, you may rest assured of the complete availability of my collaborators for the success of your mission that begins today. At the same time I ask you to express my best wishes to the Authorities who have entrusted it to you, and to the beloved sons and daughters of Guatemala. I raise fervent prayers to the Most High for their peace and prosperity, through the intercession of Our Lady of the Rosary, the heavenly Patroness of this Blessed Land.

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