



The Holy See

*Discurso al Embajador de ESPAÑA,
Excmo. Sr. Don Jesús EZQUERRA CALVO**

17 de octubre de 1987

Mr. Ambassador,

I wish to thank you for the kind words you expressed on presenting your Letters of Credence as the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Spain to the Holy See.

First of all I would like to reply to the sentiments of friendship from His Majesty, King Juan Carlos I, by asking you to convey to him my respectful greeting and good wishes for peace and prosperity.

In your address, Mr. Ambassador, you alluded to the profound and widespread presence of the Catholic faith in the life of the majority of the Spanish people and in the history of Spain. Indeed, within a few years we will celebrate the 14th centenary of the Council of Toledo. From that Council onwards the Catholic faith began to take deep root among the people of Spain, as an essential part of their spiritual and cultural heritage. Even though other religions such as Judaism and Islam have played an important role in your country and have left significant imprints on it there is little doubt that it is the Catholic faith which has left the deepest mark on the spirit and the customs of your nation and has had a decisive influence on the more important events of your history. Among the many distinguished men and women that Spain has given to the world we find a number of saints, bishops, founders, missionaries, doctors and martyrs who at the same time bring honour both to Spain and to the Catholic Church.

Indeed in my journeys to the Americas I was able to see for myself the immense work of evangelization and human and cultural endeavour which the Spanish missionaries carried on, and how they played a part in the establishment of a political and social order based on the recognition of the dignity of the human person as a citizen and child of God.

In the recent past your country has seen important transformations in the institutions and social and political structures. In the State the full and effective recognition of religious freedom is at one and the same time the result of and the guarantee of all the other civil liberties. In this juridical framework then, the non-confessional position of the State does not mean that the civil authorities should not guarantee, in the area of their competence, the practice of religious faith and of the moral life as they are professed and freely lived by the people. There we see one of the deepest manifestations of the freedom of the person and a contribution of primary importance to the right exercise of social life and the achievement of the common good.

I wish to make clear to you, Mr. Ambassador, the desire of the Church, in accordance with the mission which she has received from Jesus Christ, to cooperate with the authorities and the various institutions in your country, in the interests of peace and the welfare of the people, both spiritual and material. Therefore the areas in which this cooperation can be effected are both many and important, following the Agreement signed in 1979. The Church would hope that by following this Agreement faithfully a relationship of mutual respect and understanding may be fostered, bearing in mind both the constitutional dispositions in your country and the nature of the mission of the Church.

There is no denying that the presence and the work of the Catholic community in Spain is already an important contribution to the welfare of Spanish society. It should not be forgotten that many problems of a political nature find their roots in the moral order which is promoted in a respectful way by the evangelizing and educational work of the Church. Hence we see that the Christian life consolidates the family, gives dignity to human relations, brings people together, and educates for freedom under the headings of justice and mutual respect. Spanish Catholics, therefore, to the extent that they are faithful to the gospel and the teaching of the Church, will at the same time be sincere defenders of justice and peace, freedom and honesty, respect for life in all circumstances and of solidarity with those who are most in need. All of this will bring great benefits to Spanish society; they will be all the greater for the loyal cooperation between Church and State, always in respect and freedom.

I want to take this opportunity to express the hope that the Spanish Nation, which contributed so much to the spread of the Christian faith, especially in America, still finds in its deep-rooted piety valuable help for dealing with and resolving its internal problems; it is thus able to express itself in the area of international relations in support of human rights, the pursuit of justice, development and the consolidation of a stable and lasting peace among all the nations of the earth. These are the noble causes which this Apostolic See, with no authority other than that which was given to it by its Founder, tries to defend in every international forum in which it is present. Thus it will be a source of satisfaction and consolation to be able to work together with Spain in this peaceful and generous struggle in pursuit of spiritual values.

Mr. Ambassador, before bringing this meeting to a conclusion I wish to assure you of my esteem and support as well as my best wishes for the success of the important mission which you take up today. Please convey my hopes and good wishes to Their Majesties, the King and Queen of Spain, to the Government and civil authorities. I invoke the blessing of God and the gifts of the Holy Spirit upon you, your family and your colleagues and above all, upon the beloved Spanish Nation.

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