



The Holy See

Apostolic Journey to Mexico and Curaçao (May 6 - 14, 1990)

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS***

Tuesday, 8 May 1990

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

1. First of all, I want to express my thanks for this very special opportunity to be able to address the worthy representatives of so many countries and international Organizations accredited to this noble nation. I express to all my most cordial greetings, which I extend to the Governments and peoples whom you have the honour to represent.

It is a happy occasion during which the Holy See can express once more its appreciation for the diplomatic function to which you have dedicated your lives: your work is a composite of aspirations and efforts frequently requiring costly sacrifices from you and from your families as well. My respect and admiration unite with those of so many men and women dispersed over the five continents who in different circumstances put their hopes in your actions which could provide them with the help and protection they need. In fact, in some cases the figure of the diplomat represents not only the legitimate political and economic interests of his or her own country but also, prompted by the vocation to serve, makes possible the solution of problems which can mean so much for the lives of so many persons. Your work, then, is done on the highest level where international order rests: there where the tensions and hopes of millions of human beings are played out and real conditions for peace are determined. Truly noble and worthy of every consideration is the task of those who, like you, have made this objective - peace - their professional vocation.

2. Among the reflections to be expounded upon, we must also seek out the reason for my presence here among you. The Church, called by her Founder to proclaim the Good News of

God's love for people to the ends of the earth, cannot and must not remain indifferent to the fate of many millions of human beings. In so doing she always discovers the impetus that leads her to journey down all paths towards an encounter with man. But, as I said in my first encyclical, it is man himself "who is the first path which the Church must journey down in fulfilling her mission" (*Redemptor Hominis*, n. 14).

I restated that in Rome in my most recent speech to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, and I would like to state it once again on this especially significant occasion: "Your presence clearly shows that for your peoples and their leaders, the Church and the Holy See are by no means strangers to their achievements and their hopes, much less to the problems and adversities which mark their path" (13 January 1990, n. 4). Certainly once again we must reaffirm what the Second Vatican Council declared: "The Church is not identified with any political community, nor bound by ties to any political system" (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 76). That is not her mission. "Both, however, are at the service of man's personal and social vocation, though under different titles" (*ibid.*) .

A recent example of the Holy See's fidelity to this vocation of the Church's service to and concern for the spiritual and social good of peoples was given by this noble country of Mexico. I learned with much satisfaction of the meaningful and important gesture of the President of the United States of Mexico in naming a Personal Permanent Envoy to the Holy See; corresponding to this praiseworthy initiative was the naming of a special Envoy by the Holy See. It is concern for the supreme values of peace, solidarity among peoples, and dignity of the human person which leads her to be present in the field of international relations as well, where so many decisions concerning human dignity are constantly taking shape.

3. That same concern moves me today to call to your attention - as at the beginning of Lent I called to the attention of Catholics the world over - one of the dramas which daily has a vital effect on many of our brothers and sisters in different countries: the problem of refugees. These people " seek a welcome in other countries of the world, which is our common home; only a few of them are allowed to re enter their country of origin because of changed circumstances within those countries. For the rest the very painful experience of flight, insecurity and an anxious search for an appropriate place to settle continues. Among them are children, women - some of them widows - families which are often split up, young people whose hopes have been frustrated, and adults uprooted from their work and deprived of all their material possessions, their house and their homeland" (*Lenten Message*, n. 1). In this same message I recalled our duty to them to guarantee that their inalienable rights as persons are sufficiently recognized (*ibid.* n. 3). I am not unaware of the complexities involved in working out concrete solutions in every case. But neither can we forget that people affected by this situation must also put everything they have in the balance to seek solutions for the problems involved.

The international community cannot postpone dealing with the moral and humanitarian aspects of

these dramatic situations nor reduce to the level of a problem whose nature is exclusively or mainly economic political what is rather a threat to the dignity of the human being, "a wound which typifies and reveals the inequalities and conflicts of the modern world" (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, n. 24). Those who, for a variety of reasons, enjoy the benefit of better conditions of life also bear greater responsibility; without forgetting that perhaps some day they could be the beneficiaries of the solidarity which they once offered. There is, therefore, an urgent need to put into practice the commitments ratified by the international community concerning the rights that have been solemnly sanctioned since 1951 by the United Nations Convention on the Status of Refugees, and confirmed by the Protocol to that same Statute in 1967.

4. I would not want to end this meeting without mentioning another question which inevitably weighs heavily upon international stability: the phenomenon of the external debt. In this regard I want to recall the words of the previously cited Encyclical: The mechanism which should be serving precisely to help developing countries " has become a brake instead, and indeed in some cases has even aggravated underdevelopment" (*ibid.* 19). That clearly shows that technical means are not enough to solve the serious problems which threaten international equilibrium. While not ignoring the special situation of each country, I feel the duty to stress the urgent need for a diligent review of the ethical dimensions surrounding this crisis.

Once more solidarity among peoples shows that it is the necessary starting point for facing the great dilemmas of history. Only in that way can conflicts of interest be examined and timely measures worked out. Only in that way will the hardships encountered along the path of development be further resolved, with sufficient guarantees of their effectiveness and duration. Within the splendid setting that our meeting in Mexico City offers, I judge it necessary to underline in a special way the importance of the vocation to unity of the entire Latin American family. In fact, while the principles of reciprocity, solidarity and effective cooperation reveal themselves to be essential for treating the great topics which affect the international community (*cf.* *Speech to the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See*, 12 January 1985) they are even more so, or one could say, they are imperatives for treating the issues facing this continent, so much like a family in so many ways. The common historical, cultural and linguistic roots, not to mention the religious ones, simultaneously both assist in and provide a thrust towards the difficult undertaking of unity. I ask you not to stop when you run into difficulties, that you persevere in building solidarity, that you trust the ability of your peoples to get the work done. I encourage you, therefore, to work tirelessly on behalf of unity which will lead you undoubtedly towards a major role on the world scene.

Excellencies," Ladies and Gentlemen: I want to take advantage of this unique occasion which affords me the chance to be with you here to assure you that the Holy See will always extend to you determined cooperation for the sake of better understanding among nations, and for the sake of justice and respect for human rights. In ending this meeting my heart and my prayer are raised to Almighty God for the happy accomplishment of your missions in Mexico, for spiritual and material prosperity for your countries, for your personal happiness and that of your loved ones.

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