



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO SANTO DOMINGO
(OCTOBER 9-15, 1992)

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

Sunday, 11 October 1992

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. It gives me great satisfaction to be able to have this meeting with an illustrious group of persons such as the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Government of the Dominican Republic and the representatives of the international organizations. I express my most cordial greeting to all, extending it to the Governments, institutions and peoples whom you represent.

The noble diplomatic functions which you exercise make you the recipients of the Holy See's appreciation and great consideration, especially because yours is a labour of serving the great cause of peace, rapprochement and cooperation among peoples and a fruitful exchange for building more human and just relations within the international community.

The commemoration of the fifth centenary of the evangelization of America gives special meaning to our meeting. Indeed, this great occasion prompts us to give thanks to God because the seed of the Gospel has borne the fruit of this living and pulsing reality which is the Church in Latin America, it also places us at a critical time for the people of this continent who, together with the profound changes which have taken place on the international scene, especially in Europe, must confront urgent social and economic challenges and new characteristics in their present situation.

2. Aware of the importance of this historic moment, the Catholic Church, always near to the Latin American person in his joys and hopes, sorrows and anguish (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 1), wanted to give special emphasis to this event by celebrating the Fourth General Conference of the Latin

American Episcopate, which I shall have the joy of inaugurating tomorrow in this city. The Apostolic See shares especially in the pastoral hopes of the Bishops of Latin America and trusts that the new evangelization will receive a great momentum from this conference and will have an effect on the life of the institutions and peoples who received the light of faith 500 years ago.

All that I have said gives special importance to this meeting with the Diplomatic Corps. My message is directed to all those present, but on this special occasion, it is particularly addressed to those who govern the nations of this Continent.

3. The history of these five centuries has shaped the peoples of Latin America as a community of nations. The past with its lights and shadows, illustrates and illuminates the present situation. The future of this continent, however, must be the object of the determined, generous effort of those who devote their life to the service of the common good of society. Therefore, with all respect and deference, I address those who have responsibility for the government of Latin America, asking that they give a determined thrust to the process of Latin American integration which will allow their peoples to take their rightful place on the global scene.

There are many very important factors promoting this integration. Indeed, first and foremost, there is the presence of the Catholic religion, which is professed by the majority of Latin Americans. Its very nature places this component on a distinct level, a more profound one, than mere social and political unity. Without a doubt, the promotion of love, fraternity and social harmony among people is a substantial part of the Church's mission. The Catholic Church cannot cease promoting the integration of a people who, because of their common Christian roots, feel that they are brothers and sisters (cf. *Gaudium et spes*, n. 42).

Combined with this community of faith, we also see close cultural and geographical ties. Latin America is one of the most important geo cultural realities in today's world. Indeed, the linguistic factor has a very positive influence on communication and rapprochement between different mentalities. On the other hand, its geographic unity is a determining factor in the process of shaping the national and international communities. Last of all, the past history, which to a great degree many Latin American countries share in common, is a further element of unity.

4. Ladies and gentlemen, the need for Latin American integration is a conviction serenely shared by many and confirmed by the goals which have already been achieved in regard to the economy and parliamentary representation. Integration, however, demands effort, because it implies a change of mentality. Indeed, it demands, among other things, seeing that what unites everyone is a benefit to one's self. This requires, first and foremost, the overcoming of various conflicts and tensions which threaten the peaceful coexistence of nations and generate mistrust and mutual antagonism.

In this context I would like to make a pressing appeal for the peaceful solution of controversies.

The possibility of any type of armed conflict must be rejected with firm resolve. The defeat and humiliation of a sister nation certainly causes real, immediate harm to the victor. With all the greater reason there must be a firm rejection of armed violence within a national community. If anyone resorts to arms he does so because he feels deprived of his dignity and wounded in his civic rights, in addition to attacking the life of individuals and the principles of social life, by his fighting he is helping to perpetuate hatred and vengeance for generations to come.

Your Excellencies, respect for human rights is an indispensable requirement for a policy of peacemaking and integration. Indeed, solidarity demands the promotion of the inalienable dignity of each person. Therefore, I feel particularly drawn to restating here a reflection which I made in the Encyclical *Centesimus annus*: "Following the collapse of communist totalitarianism and of many other totalitarian and 'national security' regimes, today we are witnessing a predominance, not without signs of opposition of the democratic ideal, together with lively attention to and concern for human rights. But for this very reason it is necessary for peoples in the process of reforming their systems to give democracy an authentic and solid foundation through the recognition of those rights" (n. 47).

5. Moved by pastoral concern, in the face of the serious consequences which the external debt causes for the people of Latin America, I have made pressing appeals for the search for just solutions to this dramatic problem. However, in contradiction to the efforts being made to alleviate the financial crisis, there is evidence of phenomena such as the flight of capital, the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few, or the fact that considerable sums of money and resources are dedicated to objectives not directly related to the desired development, such as the current tendency towards arms purchases in Latin America, this means that funds which should be destined to meeting many needs, such as education health care or the serious problem of housing, are diverted towards the increase of war arsenals, further postponing the expectations of the Latin American men and women. In this regard I am reminded of some questions I posed in the Encyclical *Sollicitudo rei socialis*: "How can one justify the fact that huge sums of money, which could and should be used for increasing the development of peoples, are instead utilized for the enrichment of individuals or groups, or assigned to the increase of stockpiles of weapons, both in developed countries and in the developing ones, thereby upsetting the real priorities?" (n. 10, cf. n. 24).

On a Continent where the process of impoverishment cannot be contained, where the levels of unemployment and underemployment are so high and which, in contrast, has great potential and abundant resources, we cannot put off an adequate investment of capital, making it available to create new jobs and increase production. Poverty is inhuman and unjust; it must be eradicated. Therefore, we must make full use of human resources, this is the key factor in a people's progress. Indeed, investing in the education of children and young people means assuring a better future for all.

What an immense field there is for solidarity between peoples and governments, as well as for your analysis and suggestions in giving aid and support! May God grant those who have responsibility for the common good the clear-sightedness and wisdom to find the means and have the desire to put them into practice.

6. Ladies and gentlemen, I can assure you that you will always find the Holy See attentive to everything related to fostering fraternity and solidarity among peoples, as well as to promoting peace, justice and respect for human rights.

In concluding this meeting, I want to thank you very much for your presence, expressing my most sincere best wishes for the prosperity of your countries, for the fulfilment of the aims of the institutions which you represent, for the success of your mission and the happiness of your loved ones. Thank you very much.

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