



The Holy See

***DISCURSO DEL SANTO PADRE JUAN PABLO II
AL SEÑOR ALBERTO J. VOLLMER HERRERA,
NUEVO EMBAJADOR DE VENEZUELA ANTE LA SANTA SEDE****

Jueves 4 de mayo de 1995

Mr. Ambassador,

1. I welcome you with great joy today on this solemn occasion of the presentation of the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Venezuela to the Holy See. At the same time, I am most grateful for the message of greetings and good wishes from Mr. Rafael Caldera, President of the Republic, to whom I would like to convey my gratitude and the assurance of my prayers for his personal happiness and that of his family, and for the spiritual and material well-being of the noble and beloved Venezuelan nation.

2. Venezuela belongs to the concert of Latin American peoples who, by virtue of their history and cultural values, consider themselves Catholic as a result of the evangelization which in this country began almost 500 years ago.

Among these values I would like to mention their firmly rooted popular piety, their respect for and promotion of the human person; their solidarity, their efforts for continental unity and integration; their lasting commitment to justice and peace and their promotion of true democracy. All this has shaped a people whose members aspire to the «capacity to transcend every social order so as to move towards truth and goodness» (Centesimus annus, n. 38).

In our day, Mr. Ambassador, in addition to the effort and commitment to defending human rights, especially those of the weakest and most underprivileged persons and peoples, mentalities, practices and legislation are spreading that undermine the essential foundations of these rights and expose them to individual subjectivism, social pragmatism, the arbitrary exercise of state authority or biased interests, the lack of solidarity on the part of wealthy countries, and cultural and

moral nihilism. Economic, scientific and technological progress presents an ambiguous paradigm of genuine development and is an ambivalent demonstration «crisis of civilization». In this context the Church's joyful and hopeful proclamation appears particularly urgent and necessary. It is made through her Magisterium at the service of the truth and unity of «the Gospel of God's love for man, the Gospel of the dignity of the person and the Gospel of life ... a single and indivisible Gospel» (Evangelium vitae, n. 2), in other words, as the proclamation of genuine and always «Good News». This is the ever new and lasting basis of the «Church's preferential option for the poor and the outcast ... [as] a commitment to justice and peace ... [and] a necessary condition for the preparation and celebration of the Jubilee» (Tertio millennio adveniente, n. 51) which is one of the «signs of hope present in the last part of this century» (ibid., n. 46).

3. The pilgrim Church in Venezuela is called to be «the people of life and for life», with her rightful pastors guiding this commitment in prayer and action, in thought and pastoral work, with this «Gospel of life» (ibid., n. 2). In line with this she has declared 1995 as the Year for Life, in order to proclaim the gift of life at all its stages and levels with serenity and joy.

The Church has given evidence of this commitment in many ways, including those that mark her centuries-old witness in defence of the family education and culture, social service, civil coexistence the means of communication. With prophetic responsibility she has pointed out that the deep roots of evil are of a moral and spiritual nature and are based on personal responsibility and the misrepresentation of structures in a culture where the pseudo-values such as possession, power and pleasure hold sway.

At this crossroads, largely unknown by society as a whole, the Church ratifies and renews her commitment to promoting the human person, his primordial dignity and his irreplaceable value as society's beginning, centre and end, to safeguarding the common good by practising justice and fostering solidarity; to proposing true freedom as the basis of a genuine democracy that encourages responsibility and participation; for the benefit of peace as the expression and guarantee of harmonious and fruitful coexistence. Likewise she wants to collaborate in the integration of sister nations, helping them to overcome bad habits and promoting positive dialogue which, over and above the particularism of a historical community, will facilitate universal openness to persons and peoples, especially those bound by the same history, the same customs, the same religious faith. All this is included in the most deeply rooted and valuable experiences of the Venezuelan people.

4. Mr. Ambassador, I feel confident that the traditional bonds of mutual understanding and collaboration between the Holy See and the Republic of Venezuela will continue to be strengthened. At the same time, I repeat my conviction that the presence and action of the Church and of Catholics – full members of the national and ecclesial community – inspired in faith, sustained by hope and strengthened in charity, will continue to find expression in many activities at the service of the full material moral and spiritual development of all the citizens of this noble

people.

As you begin your mission as part of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, I would like to assure you, Mr. Ambassador, of my esteem and best wishes for you, your family and assistants. This occasion also allows me to ask you to convey to the President, Mr. Caldera, the assurance of my prayers and my best wishes for him, his family and the authorities of your country, as well as for all the beloved Venezuelan people, upon whom I Invoke abundant graces and blessings from the Lord through the Intercession of the Blessed Virgin of Coromoto.

* *L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly edition in English* n. 21 p.4.

© Copyright 1995 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana