



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF THE HOLY
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. DR. MARCO CESAR NASLAUSKY,
AMBASSADOR OF BRAZIL****

Thursday, 12 November 1998

Mr. Ambassador,

1. I am pleased to welcome the distinguished representative of Brazil for the presentation of his Letters of Credence as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Holy See. You are received here today, as you always will be, with the attention and interest deserved by Your Excellency and your noble country; the latter has shown its reciprocal esteem even in the choice of representatives for this mission, reflecting the sincere affection for the Successor of Peter of the Brazilian people and, in the first place, of the President of the Federative Republic of Brazil.

I therefore thank you for the kind words and greeting that the nation's chief executive has wished to convey to me through Your Excellency. I earnestly entreat you to do me the kindness of reciprocating his greeting on my behalf, together with good wishes for peace and prosperity.

2. With the President's recent re-election, the Brazilian Government is preparing to continue the work of social improvement rendered necessary, as Your Excellency said, on account of "the distortions and injustices accumulated" in the years of political and economic instability. I have followed with great interest the application of those measures destined, among other things, to promote a more just distribution of wealth, the right to instruction at school and to education at all levels, the thorny problem of the public debt and the drama of unemployment in many sectors of the national economy. I note with pleasure the results achieved by the Brazilian Government's commitment to give priority to the social sector, the defence of human rights, especially those of children, and the effective implementation of agrarian reform. These are serious challenges to the peace and harmonious progress of society, as you understand, but they concern a wider social need which sees in the future well-being of the Brazilian family an indispensable reference point for all government action.

In this case may I add, Mr. Ambassador, that the evidence of Brazil's development recorded in recent years will endure as long as there is an improvement in moral values which make solidarity, especially with the most needy, the focus of the most important decisions. The global crisis the world is experiencing is not only financial but is a crisis of values, of ideals, of the moral foundations which guide the family in a special way. For this reason, last year during my Pastoral Visit to Rio de Janeiro for the Second World Meeting with Families, I wished to emphasize the fact that "through the family all human life is oriented to the future. In the family man comes into the world, grows and matures. In it he becomes an increasingly mature citizen of his country, and an increasingly aware member of the Church" (*Homily*, 5 October 1997; L'Osservatore Romano English edition, 8 October 1997, p. 1).

3. The moment of hope the country is experiencing and its people's concern to see society renewed as a whole are strong incentives to wider co-operation and sentiments of sharing for the common good, which is at the root of the Christian tradition of the people of the Land of the Holy Cross.

The approach of the celebrations to mark the 2,000th anniversary of Christ's birth, coinciding with the fifth centenary of Brazil's evangelization, will doubtless help people learn from past experience and be open to the challenges of the future, with a view to the role Providence will call your great nation to play on the international scene.

Nevertheless, we know that a more just temporal order can only be achieved if material progress is accompanied by an improved spiritual outlook, that is, of moral values at the national and international level, as I recalled in the Encyclical *Sollicitudo rei socialis*; with the awareness of interdependence which today marks and conditions the life of individuals and peoples, there must be a moral presupposition which leads to "a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good" (n. 38). The protection of society's most abandoned, transparency in political decisions which complies with criteria of justice, fairness and solidarity, the constant integration of races and cultures are, among other things, principles which no society may postpone, especially Brazil, since it has widely participated in the area of international decisions as a champion of peace and harmony among nations.

I express the wish, Mr. Ambassador, that in consolidating these requirements Brazil may continue to rely on its people's Christian principles for a renewed commitment to the common good, to counter the selfishness prevalent in so many parts of the world which is stifling the many noble aspirations to good. In this regard, I would like to repeat here that the Church will always keep to the path marked by the Redeemer of men, making use of the Gospel principles of charity and justice, so that in the area of mission which is her own and with due respect for pluralism, she may promote all those initiatives which serve the cause of man as a citizen and child of God. The example of Fra Galvão, recently beatified, known by all as "the man of charity and peace" and reborn in Christ the very year your country regained its independence, holds up to all people of goodwill the path of a nation ever more just and fraternal.

The Holy See, for its part, will not cease to encourage better understanding among peoples, especially in Latin American countries - united by strong historical, cultural and religious ties - strengthening those moral and spiritual values which reinforce effective solidarity and eliminate the barriers that are such a hindrance to understanding and dialogue within the international community.

4. Mr Ambassador: at the end of our meeting, will you kindly convey my sincere good wishes to the President, at the time

when he is preparing for another term of office to guide Brazil's lofty destiny; I would also like to express my gratitude to you for the words that Mr. Fernando Henrique Cardoso sent me, together with all Brazilians, on the occasion of the beatification of Fra Antônio de Sant'Anna Galvão. I express to Your Excellency the esteem and support of the entire Apostolic See for the new and important mission you are beginning today; please God it will be crowned with abundant fruits and joys.

In asking you kindly to convey my sentiments and good wishes to those in your Government who guide the future of the Brazilian people, I make the most of this opportunity to implore through the intercession of Our Lady of the Apparition abundant blessings from almighty God for your person, for your mandate and for your family members, as well as for all the beloved children of the noble Brazilian nation.

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