



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. MR JAVIER MOCTEZUMA BARRAGÁN
AMBASSADOR OF MEXICO TO THE HOLY SEE***

Tuesday, 24 February 2004

Mr Ambassador,

I receive with great pleasure the Letters of Credence accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United Mexican States to the Holy See, and I cordially welcome you to this ceremony at which the mission entrusted to you by your Government begins. I thank you for your considerate words and for the greetings you have conveyed to me from the President of the Republic, H.E. Mr Vicente Fox Quesada. I reciprocate them by renewing my very best wishes for him and for his lofty responsibility.

Mr Ambassador, please convey my affection and closeness to the beloved people of Mexico. I have had the opportunity to visit them five times: 25 years ago, I began my Apostolic Visits as Successor of the Apostle Peter in your land. I would like to make the most of this opportunity to repeat the Message of encouragement that I addressed to all Mexicans during my last [Visit to Mexico City](#) in July 2002: *"I encourage everybody to work for the building up of an ever renewed homeland and for the Country's continual progress"* (Address on Arrival at Airport, Mexico City, 30 July 2002, n. 2; *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition [ORE], 7/14 August 2002, p. 5).

More than 10 years have passed since the re-establishment in September 1992 of diplomatic relations between Mexico and the Holy See. Throughout the years marked by deep and rapid changes in the political, social and economic structure of the Country, the Catholic Church, faithful to her pastoral mission, has continued to foster the common good of the Mexican people. She has sought dialogue and understanding with the various public institutions, upholding her right to take part in the Nation's life. Today, in the present legal context, thanks to the new climate of respect and collaboration between Church and State, progress has been made that has been of benefit to all parties. Nevertheless, it is necessary to continue working to ensure that the principles of

autonomy in the respective competencies, reciprocal esteem and cooperation with a view to the integral promotion of the human being may increasingly inspire future relations between the State Authorities on the one hand, and on the other, the Pastors of the Catholic Church in Mexico and the Holy See.

It is to be hoped that the Church in Mexico may enjoy full freedom in all the areas where she carries out her pastoral and social mission. The Church is not demanding privileges, nor does she wish to encroach on provinces that are not her own; all she desires is to carry out her mission for the spiritual and human good of the Mexican people without hindrance or obstacles. This requires that State institutions guarantee the right to religious freedom of persons and groups and avoid every form of intolerance or discrimination. In this regard, it is to be hoped that further steps, protected by the development of up-to-date legislation, may be taken in the near future concerning, among other areas, religious education in various contexts, spiritual assistance in health-care centres, social rehabilitation and assistance in the public sector, as well as representation in the media.

You must not succumb to the claims of those who, hiding behind an erroneous conception of the principle of the separation of Church and State and of the lay character of the State, seek to reduce religion to the merely private sphere of the individual and refuse to recognize the Church's right to teach her doctrine and pronounce on moral issues which affect the social order, when the fundamental rights of the person or the spiritual good of the faithful so require. In this regard, I would like to draw attention to the courageous commitment of the Pastors of the Church in Mexico in defence of life and the family.

The noble aspiration to an increasingly modern, prosperous and developed Mexico demands an effort on the part of all to build a democratic culture and consolidate the State of rights. In this regard, the Mexican Bishops, motivated by an attitude of diligent collaboration, recently launched a pressing appeal for national unity and dialogue between the leaders responsible for civil society. They pointed out that *"private interests must be set aside and initiatives of reform must be proposed, on the basis of common points, which lead to the achievement of the general well-being of the population"* (Mexican Bishops' Conference, *Building the Mexican Nation is a task for all*, 10 December 2003).

The widespread, painful problem of poverty, with its serious consequences for the family, education, health and housing, is a pressing challenge for Government and political Authorities responsible for public life. There is no doubt that its eradication will require technical and political measures aimed at ensuring that economic activities and production take into account the common good, and especially the most deprived groups. It should not be forgotten, however, that all these measures will prove futile unless they are motivated by authentic ethical values. Furthermore, I would like to encourage the efforts made by your Government and other Mexican public Authorities to foster solidarity among everyone, avoiding evils that derive from a system that

puts gain before the person and unjustly victimizes the individual. A model of development that does not tackle social imbalances with determination cannot prosper in the future.

The indigenous peoples need special attention. They are very numerous in Mexico and are sometimes relegated to oblivion. When I canonized the Indian, [Juan Diego](#) in the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe, I had the opportunity to point out that "the noble task of building a better Mexico, with greater justice and solidarity, demands the cooperation of all. In particular, it is necessary today to support the indigenous peoples in their legitimate aspirations, respecting and defending the authentic values of each ethnic group. Mexico needs its indigenous peoples and these peoples need Mexico!" (*[Homily at Canonization of St Juan Diego](#)*, Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mexico, 31 July 2002, n. 4; *ORE*, 7/14 August 2002, p. 8).

Another concern of the Church and society in Mexico is the high rate of Mexicans emigrating to other countries, especially to the United States. In addition to the uncertainty of those Mexicans who leave in search of a better life is the problem of their cultural uprooting and painful dispersion or separation from their family, not to mention the regrettable consequences of numerous illegal cases.

To stem the well-known "efecto llamada" (call effect, when immigrants who have settled in a country encourage relatives to join), which gives rise to a constant flow of immigrants that is contained by means of severe restrictions, the Church recalls that the methods developed in the host countries must be accompanied by close attention in the immigrant's country of origin, which is where the idea of emigrating begins. Therefore, the causes that drive many citizens to feel obliged to leave their homeland must first be detected and remedied. On the other hand, Mexican residents abroad must not feel forgotten by their Country's Authorities, who are called to provide care and services which will help them to keep in touch with their Country and their roots. I would also like to stress the importance of the meetings of Bishops of the frontier Dioceses of Mexico and the United States. They are jointly seeking ways to improve the situation of the immigrant population, since parishes and other Catholic institutions constitute the principal reference point with which they can identify on arrival in a foreign country.

Mr Ambassador, to conclude this meeting, I repeat my very best wishes to you for the fulfilment of the lofty mission that is beginning today. As I look forward with heartfelt anticipation to the celebration of the 58th International Eucharistic Congress that will take place next October in Guadalajara and in which thousands of faithful from many countries across the world will be participating, I ask you to convey my sentiments and hopes to the President and Authorities of Mexico. I invoke an abundance of divine graces upon you, upon your distinguished family and collaborators and upon all the sons and daughters of the beloved Mexican Nation, maternally protected beneath the starry mantle of the "Dark Virgin" of Tepeyac, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Queen of Mexico and Empress of Latin America.

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