



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. MR ARMANDO LUNA SILVA,
NEW AMBASSADOR OF NICARAGUA TO THE HOLY SEE***

Saturday, 13 March 2004

Mr Ambassador, I receive you with great pleasure at this solemn celebration of the presentation of the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Nicaragua to the Holy See, and I offer you a cordial welcome at the beginning of the important mission that your Government has entrusted to you. I am grateful for your thoughtful words as well as for the greeting you have conveyed to me from the President of the Republic, H.E. Mr Enrique Bolaños, which I reciprocate, renewing my best wishes to him for his lofty responsibility. Mr Ambassador, please convey my affection and closeness to the beloved people of Nicaragua whom I have twice had the opportunity to visit. I recall in particular that memorable day, 7 February 1996, on which Nicaraguans were truly able to meet the Successor of the Apostle Peter and freely express to him their support and affection. During my two Visits to your Country, I was able to see that Nicaraguans are a joyful, dynamic people with deep Christian roots, eager for a serene future where everyone may benefit from constant development. Down through history, however, they have frequently been put to the test. In addition to natural disasters such as earthquakes and hurricanes, they have had to endure years of social oppression and internal problems that have led many of the inhabitants to live in difficult, straitened circumstances with the various scars that these leave in all sectors, including the break-up of families, lack of access to education and housing and health-care problems. Nonetheless, Mr Ambassador, there are causes for hope in a better future. One can detect greater solidarity, not only among friendly nations but first and foremost among the citizens themselves who are aware of the need to participate. It is they who must work with courage and tenacity to improve their Homeland. The capacity for hard work, the moral fibre and the spirit of self-denial of Nicaraguans in the face of adversity are well known. They have frequently demonstrated it. If it is clear that external help is at times necessary, it should be kept in mind that Nicaraguans themselves, with the rich qualities that distinguish them, must play the lead. They must be the principal architects who build the Country day by day, working with tenacious perseverance to overcome the difficult situations which are all too often aggravated by extreme and widespread poverty, unemployment and the lack of dignified housing. In the [*Message for World Day of Peace 1998*](#), I said: "Situations of extreme poverty, wherever they are found, constitute a prime injustice. Eliminating them ought to be a priority for everyone at the national as well as the international level" (n. 5). In this regard, I would like to encourage your Government's efforts to deal with this evil; it cannot be considered endemic but results

from a series of factors that must be confronted with determination and enthusiasm, if the quality of the life of Nicaraguans is truly to be improved. These efforts, combined with those of the international community whose assistance must be well organized and managed with transparency, honesty and efficiency, are indispensable conditions for building a peaceful, just and supportive society that truly measures up to the desires of Nicaraguans and is in harmony with their traditions. The elimination of corruption that has undermined the just social and political development of so many peoples is an important factor in this struggle against poverty. I am pleased to know that the Authorities of your Country are determined to lay solid foundations that will enable them to establish a more just and participatory social order, reinforcing democracy and the public structures and promoting an educational system that encourages the civic sense of citizens and their respect for the law. The guidelines of Catholic social doctrine and the moral teachings of the Church, values that deserve to be taken into consideration by people who work in the service of the Nation, will be a great help in building a more just and fraternal society. It is impossible to progress towards true social peace without an order in which the freedoms of individuals are more and more firmly rooted. At the same time, citizens must be given an incentive to trust in the public institutions, for a more active collaboration and the responsible participation of all in the common good. The Bishops, together with their presbyterate and the various religious communities that have settled in Nicaragua, carry out their mission of evangelization and sanctification proper to their ministry. In this regard, the Authorities of your Country can continue to rely on the loyal collaboration of the Pastors of the Church and of the Catholic faithful in the specific areas of their activity, in order to sharpen in each one his sense of responsibility for improving the living conditions of all (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 57), since the integral service to human beings is also part of the Church's mission. The local Church tries to foster reconciliation. She also seeks to encourage the development of a more democratic society, offering her collaboration to ensure that values such as justice and solidarity, respect for the law and love for the truth are always present in the life of Nicaraguans. Before the conclusion of this ceremony, I would like to express to you, Mr Ambassador, my best wishes that the mission you are beginning today will be very fruitful. I ask you to convey my sentiments and hopes to the President and the other Authorities of the Republic, as I invoke an abundance of Blessings from the Most High upon you, your distinguished family and collaborators, as well as on all the sons and daughters of the noble Nation of Nicaragua, whom I entrust to the constant, motherly intercession of the Virgin Mary, so deeply venerated as the Immaculate

Conception.

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