



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF PAUL VI
TO THE NEW AMBASSADOR OF COLOMBIA
TO THE HOLY SEE***

Monday, 20 December 1971

Mr. Ambassador,

We listened with keen attention to the deferential words you have just addressed to us on presenting the Letters that accredit you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Colombia to the Holy See.

We sincerely thank Your Excellency for your devoted references to the social magisterium of the Church and for your recollection of our journey to Colombia, which evokes in our memory and in our Pastor's heart unforgettable dates, on which we had the joy of meeting personally the beloved sons of your noble country and representatives of the whole of Latin America.

An apostolic pilgrim in those lands – distant on the geographical plane but always near our spirit – we were able, in a short period of time, to get in touch with people from all walks of life, and we tried to say a word of enlightenment, affection and hope to all of them.

We spoke to them of the Gospel Message and of its application to life; we spoke of peace, brotherhood and development, as is our mission as Father and Pastor.

These are the words the Church said, and wishes to go on saying, to Colombians, trusting these words will continually be a leaven for their legitimate aspirations, their initiatives and their achievements, in order that it will be possible to arrive, with the brotherly commitment of everyone, at the spiritual, cultural, social and economic progress that is in the mind of those who long and work for a better society.

We listened with particular satisfaction to your kind reference to a very special meeting, which we had awaited with deep joy: the meeting with the rural workers. We witnessed their profound Christian faith, so deeply rooted in your people, their hopes and their desire for betterment. We said to them at that time: "We wish to be in solidarity with your good cause, which is the cause of humble people, poor people". We are well aware that we were interpreting the thought and commitment of the Church in Colombia, and that our words were to be an incitement for the future. We say so with deep joy, knowing the echo these words met with in our brothers in the Episcopate, in the clergy and in the faithful of Colombia, as well as in the civil authorities. Social commitment in favour of the neediest – a basic requirement for all real Christians – is a great service that the Church is carrying out and wishes to continue to carry out in a disinterested spirit in Colombia, within the limits of its characteristic and primarily religious mission, and in conjunction with the numerous public and private initiatives that aim at the complete development of man.

We warmly beg the Lord that these common efforts, inspired by the Christian principles that your country has incorporated in its spirit and its history, may obtain a better life for everyone and may be a guarantee of active peace, solidarity, Christian prosperity and real progress.

We are pleased to respond to the respectful greeting you transmitted to us on behalf of the highest authorities of Colombia and of its people with our sincere thanks and our fatherly affection.

While we formulate our best wishes and assure you, Mr. Ambassador, of our benevolence for the successful accomplishment of your lofty mission. We invoke the continual blessings of God upon your worthy person and upon all our beloved sons of Colombia.

*ORa n.52 p.4.