



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO H.E. Mr. LUIZ FELIPE DE SEIXAS CORRÊA
AMBASSADOR OF THE FEDERATIVE REPUBLIC OF BRAZIL
TO THE HOLY SEE***

Monday, 9 February

Your Excellency,

I welcome you with pleasure on the occasion of the presentation of the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Federative Republic of Brazil to the Holy See.

This happy circumstance affords me the opportunity to note once again the sentiments of spiritual closeness that the Brazilian people nourish for the Successor of Peter; at the same time it allows me to express anew my sincere affection and the great esteem I feel for your noble nation.

I warmly thank you for your kind words. I thank you especially for the respectful thoughts and greeting that H.E. Mr Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, President of the Republic, has been pleased to convey to me. I ask you, Your Excellency, kindly to reciprocate my greeting, with my best wishes for his happiness and the assurance of my prayers for his country and people.

I take this opportunity to recall with appreciation the Pastoral Visit that Providence enabled me to make in Brazil in 2007 in order to preside at the Fifth General Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops' Conferences, as well as at the meetings with the Head of State, both in São Paulo and more recently here in Rome. May these circumstances testify, once again, to the close bonds of friendship and fruitful collaboration between your country and the Holy See.

Although their objectives differ the Church with her religious and spiritual mission and that of the State they converge on one point: the good of the human person and the common good of the nation. However, as my venerable Predecessor, Pope John Paul ii said on one occasion:

"understanding and respect, mutual concern for independence and the principle of serving the human person in a better way, within a Christian conception, are factors which will produce a harmony for the benefit of the people themselves" (*Address to the President of Brazil and members of the Government*, Brasília, 14 October 1991, n. 2; *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition [ORE], 28 October 1991, p. 2). Brazil is a country the vast majority of whose population professes the Christian faith handed down from the origin of her people, through the evangelization that began more than five centuries ago.

Thus I am pleased to consider the convergence of principles, of both the Apostolic See and your Government, concerning the threat to world peace, weakened by the absence of respectful consideration for the human dignity of one's neighbour. The recent conflict in the Middle East shows the need to support initiatives that aim at a peaceful solution of the divergences that exist. I express the hope that your Government will continue in this direction. Moreover I would like once again to express the hope that in conformity with the principles that protect human dignity which Brazil has always championed, the fundamental human values will continue to be promoted, especially when it is a matter of explicitly recognizing the sacred nature of family life and the need to safeguard the unborn child from the moment of conception until life's natural end. Likewise, with regard to biological experiments, the Holy See is constantly encouraging the defence of an ethic that does not disfigure but rather protects the life of embryos and their right to be born.

I see with pleasure that in an atmosphere of marked prosperity the Brazilian nation is becoming an example to other neighbouring areas and in various countries on the African continent. In a climate of solidarity and mutual understanding, the Government is seeking to support initiatives that aim to encourage the fight against poverty and technological backwardness at both the national and international levels.

On the other hand, the policy of the redistribution of domestic income has facilitated greater well-being among the population. In this regard, I hope that a better distribution of income will continue to be encouraged and that greater social justice for the good of the population will be reinforced. Nonetheless it is necessary to emphasize that alongside material poverty, moral poverty is spreading throughout the world and having a considerable effect even where there is no lack of material goods. The danger of consumerism and hedonism, together with the lack of sound moral principles to guide the ordinary citizen's life, are making the structure of the Brazilian society and family vulnerable. Thus there can never be enough insistence on the urgent need for a sound moral training at all levels, also in the political sphere, in the face of the constant threats that stem from the ever prevalent materialistic ideologies and, above all, from the temptation of corruption in the management of public and private funds. To this end, Christianity can make an effective contribution as I said recently because "Christianity is a religion of freedom and peace, and it stands at the service of the true good of humanity" (*Address to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See for the traditional exchange of New Year greetings*, 8 January 2009). It is in line with these values that the Church continues to offer this service of profound evangelical importance

that encourages the achievement of peace and justice among all peoples.

The recent Agreement that redefines the juridical civil status of the Catholic Church in Brazil and regulates topics of mutual interest between the parties is a significant sign of this sincere cooperation with the Brazilian Government that the Church desires to maintain within the province of her mission. In this regard, I express the hope that this Agreement, as I have already had the opportunity to point out, "will facilitate the free exercise of the Church's mission of evangelization and further strengthen her cooperation with the civil institutions for an integral human development" (*ibid.*). Faith and adherence to Jesus Christ require the Catholic faithful, also in Brazil, to become instruments of reconciliation and brotherhood in truth, justice and love. Thus I hope to see this solemn Document ratified, so that the ecclesiastical organization of the life of Catholics may be facilitated and attain a high degree of effectiveness.

Mr Ambassador,

Before concluding this meeting, I renew the request to convey my best wishes for happiness and peace to the President of the Republic. I assure you, Your Excellency, that you will always find with the Holy See esteem, a warm welcome and support, as you carry out your mission. I hope it will be successful and bear an abundance of fruit and joy. At this time, I turn my thoughts to all Brazilians and to all those who guide their future. I wish them all happiness, with ever greater progress and harmony. I am sure, Your Excellency, that you will convey my sentiments and hopes to the Head of State. Through the intercession of Our Lady of Aparecida, I implore for you, Your Excellency, for your mandate and for your relatives, as well as for all the beloved Brazilians, the abundant Blessings of Almighty God.

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