



The Holy See

***DISCORSO DI GIOVANNI PAOLO II
AL NUOVO AMBASCIATORE DEL GUATEMALA PRESSO
LA SANTA SEDE S.E. IL SIGNOR CARLOS ALFREDO ESCOBAR ARMAS****

Sabato, 7 febbraio 1987

Mr. Ambassador,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome your Excellency today. In presenting your Letters of Credence you take up your mission as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Guatemala to the Holy See.

I wish to thank you for the kind thoughts which you have expressed towards this Apostolic See as well as the assurance of the noble sentiments of the people of Guatemala. They have a special place in my heart ever since my pastoral visit of 1983, when I had the occasion to share with pastors and people alike in that local Church their living faith and the longings of their Christian hope.

At the start of my visit to Central America I was anxious to refer to the cry which rises from the hearts of those people, calling for peace and an end to violent deaths; calling for reconciliation and an end to division and hatred; calling for a long-awaited and as yet unrealized justice; wanting to be called to a greater dignity without giving up their religious Christian nature (cf Greeting at the Airport of San Jose, Costa Rica, 2 March 1983, n. 3~).

I know that many efforts are being made to bring peace and to strengthen the bonds of friendship and cooperation between the peoples of Central America. The recent meeting between the Presidents of those nations, which took place in Esquipulas, one of the more significant Christian centres of pilgrimage in that area, represented an initiative in this sense.

In this regard all praise is due to the dialogue already begun towards building solid foundations for peaceful coexistence, as the result of justice. On the other hand, no effort should be spared in defending and strengthening the elements of cohesion which will make the nations of Central America into one great family. Identity of historical origin, one language and the Christian faith are basic values for all those peoples. Therefore, particular attention should be paid to anything which would threaten elements that favour unity and harmony.

In this regard, in the area proper to it, the ecclesiastical hierarchy of Guatemala has constantly pointed out the danger inherent in the proselytizing activities of fundamentalist sects; they sow confusion and division among the people and dilute the consistency and integrity of the Gospel message.

The Church, therefore, in fidelity to its mission, will continue to give support to the initiatives taken to overcome confrontations, giving its full commitment to all that serve life and the dignity of the human person, the promotion of the individual, the family and society. In pursuing these objectives, as I had occasion to point out in the mass meeting in Campo de Marte, in the capital of Guatemala, the social doctrine of the Church will be able to offer a concrete way towards the solution of many of the problems that affect your society. Through the application of its principles «a great service will be given to the people of today because in it will be found stimulation for the awakening of consciences, the promotion of greater justice, the encouragement of a greater sharing of goods, and the achievement of a more generalized access to the benefits of culture, thus cementing a more peaceful way of living together» (n. 7).

So that these longings may become a reality and a source of comfort in your country, I implore all the blessings of the Almighty for the people of Guatemala, its leaders and, in a special way, your Excellency and your distinguished family, at the same time I wish you every success in the mission that has been entrusted to you.

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