



The Holy See

***DISCORSO DI GIOVANNI PAOLO II
AL PRESIDENTE DELLA REPUBBLICA DEL CILE
IL SIGNOR PATRICIO AYLWIN AZÓCAR****

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Mr. President,

1. It gives me great pleasure to meet with the Chief Executive of the Chilean nation, accompanied by your distinguished wife, the ministers of State, and other dignitaries of your Government. In expressing to you my gratitude for their visit, I am pleased to give them my deferential greeting and most cordial welcome.

Your presence here reminds me of the unforgettable apostolic visit which I made to your country four years ago during which I was able to appreciate the great values which adorn the Chilean people: their deep Christian roots, their deeply human character, their open and hospitable spirit their uprightness, as well as their ability to overcome adversities. That visit was also meant to be a pilgrimage of thanksgiving to the Lord for the fortuitous accomplishment of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between two sister nations, Chile and Argentina whose relationship was seriously endangered because of the differences over the southern area.

The intense days which I shared with the beloved sons and daughters of Chile, from Antofagasta to Punta Arenas, were marked by profound celebrations of faith and love which, as I already said at the Pudahuel airport were meant to proclaim again to everyone the lasting value of the new life in Christ, promoting «the victory of good over evil, of love over hatred, of unity over rivalry, of generosity over selfishness, of peace over violence of harmony over fighting, of justice over iniquity, of truth over falsehood: to put it precisely, the victory of forgiveness, mercy and reconciliation» (Arrival Speech, Santiago, 1 April 1987).

2. Chile is a predominantly Catholic country which has made Gospel values a part of its identity as

a people throughout its history. This is a fundamental reason for hope in looking ahead with the firm resolution to support and consolidate the commitment of all the people of Chile on behalf of harmony and peaceful co-existence. It is true that the wounds and enmity of the past have not yet disappeared, therefore it is all the more necessary to back the efforts which are being made to bring about the hoped – for reconciliation as soon as possible. No doubt, it is impossible to silence the sadness which strikes my heart as a pastor because of the recent acts of violence which have taken place in Chile. Therefore I make my appeal that these reproachable acts may cease and a climate of peace, dialogue and mutual respect may be established, which will give new hope and strengthen the bonds of fraternity among all the people of Chile.

The Church in Chile – always attentive to the social teaching of the Gospel message – has cooperated, and will continue to work effectively on this path of pacification. In the present situation, her pastors and many of the faithful are devoting their best efforts to the service of the noble cause of reconciliation. Thus the bishops' standing committee pointed out recently, recalling that «the Lord invites us to build peace as a result of truth justice and love» (With Gospel Criteria, 7 March 1991, n. 3).

3. The new climate which is being strengthened in the country with divine help and the good will of all, also is helping to bring about a clearer understanding of the Church's proper mission in society. It is helping to clarify better the fields of the specific responsibility proper to the Church's mission and what corresponds to civil society, in which the faithful participate with all their rights as citizens. It also makes possible a deeper understanding of how the two fields merge together in the service of the human person; thus they are laying the foundations of a renewed respect and mutual appreciation which is aimed at a growing, loyal collaboration.

I am glad to see, Mr. President, that your government's programme has the reconciliation of the people of Chile as one of its primary objectives. Beyond the concrete means which prudence can suggest to those responsible for the common good in these circumstances, the Church inspired by the Gospel, feels in complete harmony with the spirit of truth and reconciliation, justice and pardon, which allows everyone to look to a future without hatred, division and rancor.

For the realization of these ideals of solidarity, it is without a doubt necessary that all people should be ready to join their self interests for the sake of the common good. It is necessary, however, that they safeguard the conviction that moral principles cannot be compromised and that no contingent situation entitles one to ignore them. Precisely in this is the authenticity of a true reconciliation manifest, a reconciliation which always implies the recognition of one's own guilt and the generous offering of a love which pardons.

4. The course of world history itself is showing the fallacy of the solutions proposed by Marxism. This theoretical and pragmatic system methodically exacerbates divisions among people, and pretends to resolve the human questions within a horizon that is closed to the transcendent. In the

opposite regard, the contemporary experience of the more developed countries reveals other serious defects: a vision of life based only on material well being and a selfish freedom that thinks it is unlimited.

By their contrast these considerations offer dear directions for your future. There is no true progress without the integral truth about the human being, which Christians know is found only in Christ. Certainly we should want prosperity combined with the necessary overcoming of economic and cultural diversity and the total integration of all the regions of our vast geography in a broad programme of progress and development. However, all this will be fragile and precarious if it is not combined with a deeper Christianization of our earth.

As a consequence, it is necessary to give priority attention to human rights and dignity, which the Church constantly proclaims, because they coincide with and derive from the law of God itself. The right to life, to religious freedom, to a legal order which respects and protects the natural institution of marriage and the family; the right to an integral education – which includes the passing on of moral and religious values, the right to a true equal opportunity and a legitimate freedom for all in social, political and economic life, are some other essential points on which the Church has always clearly raised her voice. She does so in recalling the moral demands of the Gospel with the humility, boldness and determination which comes from knowing that she is continuing her Master's mission.

5. Mr. President, taking advantage of your presence here, I express my fervent best wishes that the sons and daughters of the beloved Chilean nation, faithful to their noblest traditions and Christian roots, may walk the way of reconciliation and fraternity, in a determined joint effort to succeed in overcoming imbalances and conflicting interests through dialogue and peaceful means. And, as I said on several occasions during my unforgettable apostolic visit to Chile, I entrust these intentions and desires to the motherly protection of Our Lady of Carmel, your beloved Patroness.

Before concluding this encounter, I want to express once again my great pleasure in this visit, and in your person I pay homage to the noble Chilean nation; I ask the Almighty to give abundant gifts to you, your family and co-workers, and to all the beloved sons and daughters of Chile, always so close to the Pope's heart.

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