



The Holy See

Apostolic Journey to Brazil (October 12-21, 1991)

To the President of the Republic of Brazil

(Brasilia, 14 October 1991)

Mr. President, 1. First of all, permit me to express my feelings of gratitude for the welcome given me by your Foreign Minister, Dr Francisco Rezek, when I arrived in Brazil, and for the noble words Your Excellency has just addressed to me, which are undoubtedly intended not only for me, but for the mission which divine Providence entrusted to me 12 years ago and for the universal Church herself, of which I am the Pastor;

My return to Brazil, as I mentioned when I arrived, is intended precisely as a fulfilment of that pastoral mission of gathering together, in an exclusively Gospel context, the sheep of the flock who dwell in the land of the Holy Cross. Therefore, this moment takes on a special significance, considering the fact that I am not only addressing the highest representative of the Brazilian nation, but also the governmental authorities who have the serious responsibility of representing and leading the people's will as promoters of peace and progress among their citizens.

2. The Church in her exclusively religious and spiritual mission certainly has a different purpose than that of the State with its concern for the common good of every person. Nevertheless, they converge at a common point: the human person and the good of the homeland.

The Church, ever mindful of the difficulties she has in achieving her own objectives, can more easily understand those which a nation's government has in fulfilling its own duties in regard to each individual. But she must offer her own cooperation so that these goals may be reached, while respecting the sphere which is specifically the State's. There will be divergences, due to human limitations and the variety of problems, especially in a country as large as Brazil. Nevertheless, 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.

3. Mr. President of the Republic, Members of the National Congress and Supreme Federal Court, Ministers of State, Governors, Ladies and Gentlemen.

In thanking you for the homage you have paid to the Successor of St Peter on his second visit to Brazil, I wish to express my appreciation for the significant mission you exercise as representatives of the entire Brazilian people.

At this moment in its history, Brazil is going through a phase, the delicacy of which is known by all, in regard to the enormous social and economic problems whose solution cannot be further delayed. The people of the whole nation have their gaze fixed on the decisions which you are making, in the hope of a brighter and happier future for their children.

I find the words spoken a few months ago by your President to be particularly significant, when he called upon the nation to make an effort to share responsibility so as to overcome the crisis and the inequalities which afflict the great majority of Brazilians (April 1991).

I am certain that I am not at all departing from my pastoral purpose and the exclusively spiritual exercise of my mission when I address you and ask God to enlighten you in this difficult mission of defending the spiritual and moral values of Brazil. May the problems raised by society always be examined according to the criteria of justice and Christian morality, rather than private interests. I believe that the latter is not what motivates your public conduct, since such an attitude would be inconsistent with the vision of the common good which certainly inspires you. May your commitment to serve all those initiatives which promote social, economic and scientific progress for the benefit of the Brazilian family be continually more authentic and generous. May your work be in defence of life and not against it. With imagination, courage and perseverance you will thus allow all Brazilians peacefully to take the place assigned to them in national harmony. In this regard, Mr President, I rejoice at your concern for education, which is the fundamental condition of genuine development. Brazil cannot do without its richest gift – its vast number of children and young people who need to be fully integrated into social life, in work, in an effective citizenship. The blessing, which I will shortly have the pleasure of imparting symbolically to the model of the Integrated Centre for Child Welfare must inspire the absolute priority which Your Excellency's government wishes to give to public and private school establishments, which have the objective of providing quality teaching and a genuine and integral education. The latter is, in fact, the primary foundation of a truly democratic society.

4. I will continue on the itinerary drawn up for my pastoral visit to the various capitals of the Federation's States bringing this sign of hope which I want to receive from Your Excellency, as well as from the Senators, Deputies and Ministers I am motivated by a spirit of great affection

which I wish to bring to the sons and daughters of Brazil, with whom I wish to be united in one grand embrace. Not being able to do this personally, I ask you, ladies and gentlemen, to do it for me. May everyone know that the Pope holds the Brazilian people in high esteem, as he does their history, their struggles and their achievements. The Pope blesses each and everyone, from Chui to Oiapoque, from the farthest point of the Acre to the islands of Fernando de Noronha.

May God bless Brazil!

May peace and harmony, accompanied by material and spiritual prosperity, be with you, and may Our Lady of the Apparition protect the mission which Providence has entrusted to you.

Thank you very much.

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