



The Holy See

***DISCURSO DEL SANTO PADRE JUAN PABLO II
AL SEÑOR GALO ALBERTO LEORO FRANCO,
NUEVO EMBAJADOR DE ECUADOR ANTE LA SANTA SEDE****

Viernes 2 de abril de 1993

Mr. Ambassador,

I am particularly happy to receive the Letters of Credence accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ecuador to the Holy See. I am sincerely grateful for the friendly words you have addressed to me, and especially for the respectful greetings from Mr. Sisto Durán-Ballén, Constitutional President of the Republic, to whom I ask you to convey my best wishes for peace and well-being, together with my wishes for the prosperity and total progress of the beloved country of Ecuador.

Mr. Ambassador, you referred to the Holy See's work in promoting peace and fostering solidarity among peoples and nations. Indeed, these are the great causes of humanity that the Church seeks to defend in all the international forums in which she participates. By her spiritual and religious nature, she can carry out this service free from earthly motives or special interests, since as Vatican II teaches: «she is not committed to any one culture or to any political, economic or social system. Hence she can be a very close bond between the various communities of men and nations provided they have trust in the Church and guarantee her true freedom to carry out her mission...» (Gaudium et spes, n. 42).

I am pleased to know that your country's authorities are working resolutely to establish solid foundations making it possible to strengthen a more equitable social order in which more people may share. Everyone's cooperation with a wide range of goals is necessary for achieving such a noble task, putting the common good before individual interests and always promoting truly constructive dialogue that avoids discredit and confrontation. I fervently hope that the Ecuadorians, most of whom profess to belong to the Catholic Church, may realize that it is up to them to build a society of solidarity and brotherhood, where the harmonization of the legitimate

rights of all citizens in a common plan for productive coexistence is possible. Concerning this, the Christian principles that have shaped the life of the Ecuadorian nation should be a reason for well-founded hope and a stimulus in overcoming current problems, inspiring, with God's help, a new dynamism that opens up new ways to overall development in Ecuador.

The Christian concept of life and the moral teaching of the Church should remain the essential elements inspiring all those who work for the good of individuals, families, and society. Moreover, we cannot help noticing that in many parts of the world today we are witnessing a crisis of values that affects institutions like the family, or broader sectors of the population, such as youth.

Regarding this, I would like to recall my words to the Bishops of the Episcopal Conference of Ecuador during their last *ad limina* visit. «In a Christian country like Ecuador, nothing could be more logical and just than that the Christian principles and values of its population be safeguarded. For that reason, the whole of society should join together in support of the work of education, which contributes to the greatness of the nation» (ORa 11 Dec. 1989, p. 10).

During my pastoral visit to your country, to which you so kindly referred, I was able to appreciate the genuine values with which the people of Ecuador are blessed. In this respect, my affectionate meeting in the ancient city of Latacunga with the inhabitants of the region comes to mind, and in particular with the beloved indigenous communities for which the Church shows special concern, not only in her evangelizing activity but also in human and social promotion. Reminded by the recent commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the arrival of the Gospel in America, I would like to emphasize «the special place in the Pope's heart and affections for the descendants of the men and women who populated the continent when the cross of Christ was planted there on 12 October 1492» (Address to representatives of the indigenous peoples in Santo Domingo, 13 Oct. 1992, n. 1; ORa, 21 Oct. 1992, p. 3).

There are many deep bonds which have united Ecuador, from its very origin, to the Apostolic See. In these circumstances, I would like express to you, Mr Ambassador, the Church's firm determination to continue to cooperate with the authorities and the various institutions of your country to serve the great causes of humanity as citizens and children of God (cf. *Gaudium et spes*, n. 76). For their part, the pastors, priests and religious communities of Ecuador tirelessly continue their work of evangelization, pastoral care and education, for the good of society as a whole. They are moved to it by their vocation of service to all, especially to the most needy, thus contributing to the integral development of the Ecuadorian people and the protection and promotion of supreme values.

In your kind words, you referred to your country's contribution to fostering Latin American integration, and in particular, to strengthening the «Andes plan» that links the five «Bolivarian» countries. The Holy See cannot fail to support efforts aimed at strengthening social and economic structures that open new ways of progress and development to the peoples of this area. The fostering of unity and good understanding is a task which requires generous cooperation in order

to reinforce the bonds of solidarity between all human beings, and in particular, between those of the great Latin American family. I fervently hope that, faithful to its most noble traditions and its Christian roots, Ecuador may continue on the way of fraternity and understanding, effectively contributing also to making the bonds of friendship, peace, justice and progress more operative and effective between peoples who throughout their history have been united by geography, Christian faith, language and culture.

Mr. Ambassador, in renewing my best wishes to you for the success of your noble mission which begins today, I assure you I shall pray to the Almighty that with his gifts he may always help you, your distinguished family, your co-workers, the leaders of your noble country as well as the beloved people of Ecuador, whom I always remember with particular affection.

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