



# The Holy See

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**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II  
TO H.E. Mrs Rosemary Karpinsky Dodero,  
NEW AMBASSADOR OF COSTA RICA TO THE HOLY SEE\***

*Thursday, 12 December 1996*

*Madam Ambassador,*

1. I am pleased to receive you at the solemn occasion of the presentation of the Letters of Credence accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Costa Rica to the Holy See, and I sincerely thank you for your words. They demonstrate the good relations existing between this Apostolic See and this noble Central American nation whose inhabitants, as you yourself have just said, while preserving profound human values in their traditions, find moral guidance in the Catholic religion which has positive repercussions on the life of Costa Rican society.

I am likewise grateful for the friendly greeting from Mr José María Figueres Olsen, President of the Republic, who was kind enough to visit me last March, thus emphasizing his personal sentiments and desire to increase Church-State co-operation for the common good. I reciprocate and ask you to convey my best wishes to the President of the country for his lofty and delicate mission.

2. Costa Rica, which I had the opportunity to visit in March 1983, and of which I still have vivid memories, has an immense treasure in its “profound human, moral and religious values which have built and sustain this country” (*Arrival address*, Juan Santa María Airport, Costa Rica, 6 March 1983, *L’Osservatore Romano* English edition, 5 April 1983, p. 10). This brings me to renew my wish that these values “may be preserved and consolidated, because in this way one can look to the future with hope and optimism” (*ibid.*).

One of these values is its long democratic tradition as you recalled, pointing out how, throughout your country’s progress, its leaders have retained the objective of upholding the democratic system.

The Church, which devotes all her energy to promoting whatever can foster the defence of dignity and the gradual perfecting of the human being who “is the primary route that the Church must travel in fulfilling her mission” (*Redemptor*

hominis, 14), promotes the value of democracy understood as a participatory system of governing the State, through special representative and controlling institutions, in the service of the common good. But it should be taken into account that a democracy without values easily tends to become totalitarian, both open and hidden, as history shows (cf. Centesimus annus, 46).

In fact, respect for the absolute values and inalienable rights of each, which do not depend on an established juridical order nor on popular assent, requires that the democratic system always have an ethical foundation since, as I had the opportunity to state in my Encyclical Evangelium vitae, “It is therefore urgently necessary, for the future of society and the development of a sound democracy, to rediscover those essential and innate human and moral values which flow from the very truth of the human being and express and safeguard the dignity of the person: values which no individual, no majority and no State can ever create, modify or destroy, but must only acknowledge, respect and promote” (n. 71).

3. Costa Rica plays an active and highly appreciated role in the international context. After the periods of totalitarian regimes, ideological confrontations and civil wars which have plagued the Central American isthmus for several decades, systems of participatory democracy have been reinforced. In this regard, the Church has not remained on the fringe of the process of reconciliation and democratization, and desires to continue to offer her support and collaboration so that values such as justice and solidarity may always be present in the life of the nations in this region.

The Holy See notes with appreciation and interest the enthusiasm with which your country’s Government is committed to the process of Central American integration. In a context of increasingly powerful political and economic groups, there is a growing need for greater solidarity between the countries of the isthmus which, despite their cultural and social differences, are called to join forces in the fight against poverty, unemployment, drug dealing and the other evils which threaten their stability and well-being.

Costa Rica, distinguished by its traditional spirit of openness and respect, is called to make a considerable contribution to ensuring that the ideals of integration and regional solidarity are strengthened, for the benefit of all. The plight of the immigrants who have arrived in the country in search of bread, a roof over their heads and work, deserves special attention. The Costa Rican people’s deep sense of hospitality is well-known as are the authorities’ remarkable efforts to regularize the situation of these immigrants so as to integrate them into national life.

4. On the other hand, Costa Rican society is experiencing a time of great change and profound readjustment in its various environments. Its Government is committed to furthering economic and social development, to which should be added their ecological commitment, which has deeply penetrated the Costa Rican soul, in order to prevent uncontrolled development from damaging the natural beauty with which the Divine Creator has endowed his earth. The human potential represented by the youthful majority of the population, the rich civil, historical and cultural heritage, the successes achieved in the field of health care and education, must not make us forget that there are also causes for concern such as, among others, the difficult economic situation, unemployment and the public debt, both internal and external. In addition, in recent years there have been natural disasters such as the hurricane “Caesar”, which sowed death and destruction; I noticed that before it the Catholic faithful, responding to their Bishops’ appeal, mobilized themselves to help the injured rapidly and with great generosity.

In the face of these evils, it is necessary for all citizens to be involved in furthering the common good through serious and honest work, with renewed patriotism and with putting the common concerns before individual or group interests. If indeed citizens have a right of access to the services and wellbeing they need, likewise the country requires them all to contribute to peace and common development. The Church shares this task, in the area of spirituality and morals, in order to form consciences and to create a positive mentality of responsibility, respect and solidarity.

In this regard, it is of primary importance to safeguard and strengthen the institution of the family. There is no doubt that many social evils originate in the disintegration of the family, which is why it is necessary to teach the new generations the meaning of true love, the total and indissoluble gift of self through marriage which makes it possible to get the better of moments of misunderstanding and lack of trust, so that every home may be a place of love and peace and a true school for humanity.

5. Madam Ambassador, before concluding this meeting, I would like to express my best wishes to you that the mission beginning today may be successful and bring good results. I ask you once again kindly to convey my sentiments and hopes to the President of the Republic, as well as to the other authorities of your country, while, as a spiritual pilgrim to the shrine of Cartago, I implore God's Blessing on all the beloved children of your noble nation through the Queen of Angels, Mother of all Costa Ricans.

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