



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE NEW AMBASSADOR OF ECUADOR
TO THE HOLY SEE**

Monday, 11 March 2002

Mr Ambassador,

1. I am pleased to receive you at this audience in which you present the Letters of Credence appointing you Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ecuador. At the same time, I welcome you and offer you my very best wishes for the accomplishment of the high office that your Government has entrusted to you, to consolidate and build up the good diplomatic relations that already exist between your country and this Apostolic See.

In your kind words to me for which I am deeply grateful, you referred to the past, present and future of the Ecuadorean people whose history and identity constantly point to the Christian roots, the intense evangelizing activity of the Church and in the tireless endeavour to promote a life that is in every way worthy of all your citizens. As I had the opportunity to tell Ecuadoreans during my unforgettable visit to that nation, "the Pope carries you in his heart and begs God on your behalf for bread for the body and for the soul" (*Address to the Poor*, "Stella Maris" Square, Guayaquil, Ecuador, 1 February 1985; *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, 11 March 1985, n. 7).

Please convey my cordial greeting to President Gustavo Noboa Bejarano and my deep appreciation to the Ecuadorean people who welcomed me with such enthusiasm, showing their affection and loyalty to the Successor of Peter.

2. As you pointed out, diplomatic relations between Ecuador and the Holy See are regulated by the *Modus Vivendi*. It has now existed for 65 years and has produced abundant fruits of cooperation in mutual respect and appreciation for the benefit of the Ecuadorean people. Times and circumstances recently imposed the need for new measures, such as the Decree on Worship of 16 January 2000, which improves certain administrative aspects of the legal recognition of

ecclesial institutions. Indeed, the changing situation requires not only the prompt adaptation of both national and international legal instruments but also a truly cordial relationship, which may every day find new dimensions in which to grow and gain in strength. Thus any unfounded reticence or narrow views that prevent either party from giving the best of itself should be minimized.

Indeed, the common goal of Church and State in their respective contexts is the material and spiritual good of the human person at a given moment in history. Therefore the Church inculcates in all her faithful the desire to strive, with the spirit and energy that stem from the desire to serve their neighbour in accord with the most important commandment of Christ, to promote actions that favour authentic development and thereby contribute to the common good and to the wellbeing of their country.

3. Everyone knows about the intense activity that the Church carries out for all Ecuadoreans in her evangelizing mission through her pastors and priests, consecrated persons, movements and various institutions, as well as the personal contributions of so many of the faithful. Furthermore, especially in the particularly difficult moments that the country has been through in recent years, the Church has wasted no time in procuring extraordinary assistance, both directly, through her own international institutions and through appeals to other nations for solidarity. In this way she seeks to make effective her effort to build a true "culture of solidarity" (*Message for the World Day of Peace*, 1 January 2001, n. 17). This endeavour belongs to the tireless work of the Church for a world order that will preserve the basic ethical values and protect the fundamental institutions of society, such as marriage and the family.

In this context, the care and education of the young generations are very important because they are called to be the architects of the future and of the national community. It is indispensable that all Ecuadoreans, whatever their class or status, have access to an integral human education that will give them both a technical and humanistic formation and ethical values and openness to the transcendent and religious dimension of life, (in full respect for the right of families to choose the type of education they want for their children). Fruitful collaboration between the Church and the State in this domain will yield precious benefits for the whole national community. In this regard, it is also desirable that legislation and agreements faithfully respect demands for these goods to which citizens are entitled, that they be rigorously applied throughout your land, and that the appropriate means be found to enforce them, especially in the case of less privileged persons.

4. It is of course understandable that the country's economic situation is a primary concern of the Ecuadorean Government and people. In fact, not only does the crisis aggravate pre-existing social problems, casting a shadow over the citizens' hopes for a better future, at least in the short-term; it also gives rise to regrettable phenomena such as shortfalls in the coverage of the social or health-care services, the scarcity of work posts, and the freezing of projects for development and promotion in the neediest sectors.

Mr Ambassador, you may be certain that the Church is not insensitive to the many personal, family and social tragedies that this situation causes. She does and will do all she can to be close to the Ecuadorean people, bringing all possible help to them, and especially to the neediest who are frequently forgotten when the time comes to hand out available resources.

The Church takes on these tasks, faithful to her own social teaching, which "is itself a valid instrument of evangelization" (*Centesimus annus*, n. 54) and without claiming to intervene, to compensate for or to replace the government leaders of civil society. She is nonetheless convinced that her traditional appeal not to overlook the ethical dimension, social repercussions or the indispensable value of human dignity in economic issues, also contributes to the harmonious development of peoples. Indeed, the stable, integral progress of any people requires honesty in its administrators, justice in the distribution of goods and an awareness of responsibility and solidarity on the part of all: these are ethical values without which production can be increased, but not true good.

5. One of the most complex and dramatic consequences of the economic crisis in Ecuador is the emigration of so many of its citizens to other countries, that has grown in recent years. The uncertainty of those who leave in search of better living conditions is combined with the pain of being uprooted from their culture, the risk of confusion in religious practice with the absence of the usual ways it is lived and, in many cases, by the painful break-up of the family nucleus, not to mention the grim consequences of illegal or clandestine situations.

Although she knows that "in such a complex issue there are no 'magic' formulas" (*Message for the World Day of Peace*, 1 January 2001, n. 13), the Church is not limited to repeating the fundamental ethical principle that "immigrants must always be treated with the respect due to the dignity of every human person" (*ibid.*), but mobilizes all her resources to meet their needs in the best way possible. Indeed, the Churches and other Catholic institutions are frequently a major place to gather, where they can celebrate their feasts, keep alive their national identity; where they can find effective support, perhaps their only support, in defending their rights or resolving unbearable situations.

However, the action that takes place in the countries of destination must be accompanied by careful attention to this problem in the country of origin of the immigrants; it is here that they conceive most of their plans. The causes that drive so many people to leave their country must be combatted, and when the phenomenon cannot be avoided entirely, it is essential to prevent every kind of illegality, corruption or ruthless crime that so often ensnare immigrants in a brutal, modern slave trade. On the other hand, Ecuadoreans who live abroad should not feel forgotten by their country. Sometimes, in simple ways, it can attend to them and serve them in a way that keeps alive their patriotism and legitimate pride in their origins.

6. The recent initiatives to encourage dialogue between the State authorities and different ethnic

groups, to improve understanding and to achieve a broader participation in the life and resources of the nation are a sign of hope that must endure. By continuing in this, Ecuador will succeed in becoming an example and promoter of coexistence and peace among the Andean countries.

Even when dialogue can seem to be a slow and difficult way, it is still the best way to solve serious internal and external problems and to obtain the positive results for the good of the Ecuadorean people. Dialogue cultivates the noblest and most profound dimensions of the human being, such as the power of reason and truth; it fosters understanding, encourages an appreciation of the values of others and inspires attitudes of harmony, solidarity and collaboration. For this reason, its results tend to be more permanent and its constant practice is a source of enrichment to all.

7. Mr Ambassador, I am sure that, as was true in the past, the Church in Ecuador will continue to offer her positive contribution to the process of reinforcing the unity between the varied sectors of civil society with the spirit of peaceful coexistence and solidarity among all, that will help consolidate the political and civil institutions that look after the common good of the nation.

Mr Ambassador, I welcome you once again, and I beg Almighty God to bless you and your staff as you carry out your important mission, as I entrust the beloved Ecuadorean people to the heavenly protection of Our Lady of the Presentation of Quinché.

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