



The Holy See

*ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO H.E. Mr ACISCLO VALLADARES MOLINA
NEW AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF GUATEMALA
TO THE HOLY SEE**

Saturday, 31 May 2008

Mr Ambassador,

I gladly receive the Letters that accredit you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Guatemala to the Holy See. I am pleased to address my cordial welcome at this solemn act with which you have begun the mission entrusted to you, and at the same time I express my gratitude for the words addressed to me, and also for the respectful greeting that you have conveyed to me from the President of your noble Nation, Mr Álvaro Colom Caballeros. I ask you to convey to him my best wishes for him and for his Government, assuring him of my prayer for the security, the progress and the harmonious co-existence of the beloved Guatemalan people.

This year is the 25th anniversary of the first Pastoral Visit of my Venerable Predecessor in this beautiful land "of eternal Spring". On that memorable occasion, the Servant of God John Paul II was able to manifest the solicitude with which the Holy See has accompanied this Nation in the various vicissitudes, showing herself particularly close to it in the most difficult moments, to share the concerns of its people and, above all, to encourage it to work selflessly for the common good. Mr Ambassador, I know that the Guatemalans reciprocate this solicitude with a deep adherence to the Bishop of Rome, which contributes to strengthen the bonds of friendship that have united your Country to the Holy See for some time. The Holy See holds these flexible relations in high esteem and expresses its best wishes so that the circumstances in which Guatemala lives permit success in the present in the diverse areas of society and to form a solid basis in order to meet a promising future.

The recent *ad limina* visit of the Guatemalan Bishops offered us a magnificent opportunity to know

better the vitality with which the Church in your Nation proclaims the Gospel, opens ways to hope and holds out a fraternal hand to all citizens, in particular to the most needy. In this optic the Church shares the concerns of the Guatemalan Authorities, as Your Excellency has pointed out, faced with the phenomena that afflict a large part of the population, such as poverty and emigration. The Church's rich experience, accumulated in the course of history, can assist in finding measures to face these problems in a humanitarian prospective and to strengthen solidarity, indispensable to reach effective and lasting solutions. In this sense, to the necessary technical and economic programmes one must add the other aspects that promote the dignity of the person, the stability of the family and an education that accounts for the most important human and Christian values. Also not to be forgotten are those who have had to abandon their homeland, without ceasing to carry it in their heart. This is a duty of gratitude and of justice toward those who, in fact, are also a font of significant resources for the Country in which they were born.

Another challenge for Guatemala is that of remedying the malnutrition of many children. The right to nutrition responds principally to an ethical motivation: "give the hungry to eat" (cf. Mt 25: 35), that prompts a sharing of material goods as a sign of the love which we all need. As I have already stated on another occasion: "The objective of eradicating hunger and at the same time of being able to count on healthy and adequate food also demands specific methods and actions that mean a wise use of resources that respect Creation's patrimony. Working in this direction is a priority that will benefit not only science, research and technology, but also take into account the cycles and rhythm of nature known to the inhabitants of rural areas, thus protecting the traditional customs of the indigenous communities, leaving aside egotistical and exclusively economic motivations (cf. *Message to the Director General of FAO on the occasion of the World Food Day*, 4 October 2007).

This primary right to nutrition is intrinsically linked to the safeguarding and to the defence of human life, the solid and inviolable rock upon which the whole edifice of human rights is founded. Therefore, the effort to assist mothers will never be sufficient, above all those who are in grave difficulty, so that they can bring up their children with dignity, thus avoiding the unjustifiable recourse to abortion. In this sense safeguarding human life, especially the unborn, whose innocence and vulnerability are greatest, is an ever current task, which is connected, by its own nature, to making the adoption of children guaranteed in every moment by the legal procedures used for this scope.

The scourge of social violence that often worsens due to lack of dialogue and cohesion in the domestic hearth: the lacerating economic inequality, the grave negligence and lack of hygiene, the consumption and trafficking drugs and the plague of corruption. I recognize with satisfaction the steps that have been taken in your Nation in the fight against these tragedies, efforts that must continue, promoting the cooperation of all to put an end to them through the development of upright values and to combat illegality, impunity and bribery.

Mr Ambassador, before concluding this meeting, I would like to congratulate you and your family, and also the other members of this diplomatic mission and to express my best wishes at this time that Your Excellency, begins again the honourable responsibility of representing your Country to the Holy See. Rest assured that you will always find the help you need with my collaborators in your lofty duty.

While I entrust the people and the Guatemalan Authorities to the maternal intercession of Nuestra Señora del Rosario (Our Lady of the Rosary), I fervently ask God to bless and accompany the journey that this Country is taking, so that the star of peace, justice, prosperity and fraternal harmony continually shine on it.

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