



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO H.E. Mr. FAUSTO CORDOVEZ CHIRIBOGA
AMBASSADOR OF ECUADOR TO THE HOLY SEE****

Saturday, 27 October 2007

Mr Ambassador,

I am pleased to receive the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Ecuador to the Holy See. As I offer you my cordial welcome at this solemn ceremony, I would like once again to express the sincere affection I feel for all the sons and daughters of this noble Nation.

I am grateful for the respectful greeting that Mr Rafael Correa Delgado, the Constitutional President, has graciously offered me as well as for his kind words for this Apostolic See and for myself, which also testify to the filial sentiments of the Ecuadorean People. I therefore ask you kindly to convey my sincere gratitude to him.

During my visit to Ecuador in 1978 as Pope John Paul II's Representative, I had the opportunity to meet a people peaceful, simple and hospitable, but above all deeply rooted in the Christian faith, which, as you emphasized in your discourse, has yielded abundant fruit in various generations. In this context I would like to recall *St Marianita of Jesus* and especially the young lay woman, *Bl. Narcisa of Jesus*, so dear to the faithful people who hope she will be canonized soon.

In their Saints the Christian faithful discover the ripe fruit of a faith that has marked their history. This patrimony is passed on down the centuries with various expressions in popular piety and art, together with the moral, civic and social values of their national identity.

Humanity today is facing new prospects of freedom and hope that are often disturbed by unstable political situations and the consequences of weak social structures. Moreover, the interdependence between States is constantly increasing. It is therefore necessary and urgent to

work for the construction of an internal and international order that furthers peaceful coexistence, cooperation, respect for human rights and, first and foremost, recognition of the central place of the person and of his or her inviolable dignity.

In this regard and thinking of the numerous Ecuadoreans who emigrate to other countries in difficult conditions in search of a better future for themselves and their families, we cannot forget that: "Love - *caritas* - will always prove necessary, even in the most just society. There is no ordering of the State so just that it can eliminate the need for a service of love. Whoever wants to eliminate love is preparing to eliminate man as such" (*Deus Caritas Est*, n. 28b). Thus, it is love, as a generous gift of oneself to others, which gives rise and continues to give rise to this network of educational, social, promotional and developmental institutions which do honour to the Church and to Ecuadorean society.

The Catholic Church, which through her pastoral ministry and "by her nature and mission... is universal in that she is not committed to any one culture or to any political, economic or social system" (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 42), makes an important contribution to the common good of the Country. Hence, it is considered necessary to promote and strengthen the area of her freedom, recognized in the constitutional and legal texts of Ecuador. Thus, it is likewise to be hoped that the new constitutional order will contemplate the broadest possible guarantees for the religious freedom of Ecuadoreans so that the Nation can rely on a legal framework in conformity with the context and the international Agreements.

In addition to being an inalienable right, the Church's freedom of action is the fundamental condition for completing her mission among the people, even in difficult circumstances. Therefore, "we do not need a State which regulates and controls everything, but a State which, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, generously acknowledges and supports initiatives arising from the different social forces" (*Deus Caritas Est*, n. 28b).

Moreover, the aspiration to a democratic government committed to promoting a culture of respect and equality before the law and an exemplary exercise of authority that aims to serve the whole people could not be otherwise. For all these reasons, the Ecuadorean Government has expressed its determination to give priority to assisting the most deprived, drawing inspiration from the Church's social teaching. It is to be hoped, then, that citizens may enjoy all the rights, observing the corresponding duties, and thus obtain a better standard of living and easier access to dignified housing and employment, to education and to health care, with full respect for life from its conception to its natural end.

Mr Ambassador, before concluding this meeting, I would like to express my best wishes for the happy accomplishment of your lofty mission. May it contribute to reinforcing the traditional bonds of dialogue and cooperation between Ecuador and the Holy See, as I ask you kindly to convey my sentiments to your Government and to the other national Authorities. At the same time, I

remember in my prayers the beloved Ecuadorean People and implore from the Most High an abundance of Blessings upon Ecuador, upon you, upon your distinguished family and all those who work with you.

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