



The Holy See

DISCORSO DI GIOVANNI PAOLO II

AL NUOVO AMBASCIATORE DI COLOMBIA

PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE S.E.

IL SIGNOR JULIO CESAR TURBAY AYALA* *Lunedì, 2 marzo 1987*

First of all, I express my appreciation for the kind words which you addressed to me. They are further proof of the affection and devotion which the people of that noble nation bear towards the Successor of Peter, especially after my pastoral visit which took place in July of last year. I wish to thank you also for the good wishes which you brought from the President of the Republic.

Your Excellency referred to the need to bring all forces together in order to achieve basic human and spiritual conditions. These conditions will allow the citizens of Colombia to build up a society in which reconciliation and brotherly unity as well as justice may be seen to be evident and growing realities. These objectives have always received the full support and defence of the Church in Colombia. Following Christ's commandment (Mt 28:19-20) the Church wishes to be present at this crucial time for humanity and for that Catholic community in particular.

Life in Colombia, which I got to know through meeting the people during my recent visit to that part of the world, inspires me once more to turn to the authorities and other organizations in your country. I encourage them to preserve the rich spiritual and cultural heritage in which there is an array of deeply rooted values always requiring such protection. Among these, respect for life and for the human being, as well as a capacity for dialogue and the search for the common good hold a special place.

In order to carry out this task there will be a need to draw on all your social organizations and institutions in an effort to pursue and consolidate these priority objectives. My predecessor Paul VI during his visit to Colombia in 1968 appealed to those who hold responsibility in that country by saying: «See and embrace with courage the new insights for the world in which you live... Never forget that certain crises in history might have taken another direction if the necessary reforms had been in time to prevent with courageous sacrifices the explosive revolutions of desperation»

(Homily in the Mass for the Day of Development, 23 August 1968).

Colombia may be considered to be a potentially rich country thanks to its variety of natural resources and possibilities. However, in order that that wealth may meet the minimum vital necessities of the or people and give the citizens a full right to it, all forms of egotism and passable structural injustice will have to be overcome along with all kinds of class struggle. These are attitudes which prevent people working together for the common good.

I take consolation in what Your Excellency has said regarding the efforts of the Government to deal in an equitable way with the complex problems affecting your country at this moment. In my meeting with the authorities in Bogota I asked them to be the builders of a just society in which «the willingness to work, honesty, the spirit of participation at all levels, the practice of justice and charity, might become realities. A society bearing the seal of Christian values is the greatest element in social cohesion and the best guarantee for its future. A way of living together which will remove the obstacles to national integration and provide the framework for the development of the country and the progress of men and women» (Address to the Authorities, 1 July 1986, n. 3).

Only in this way will it be possible for the marginalized sectors to be integrated and reinserted into society. The Colombian Church community in this area is intensifying its attention and ministry towards the poor and the abandoned, in accordance with the social doctrine of the Church. In this strictly pastoral endeavour it hopes to be able at all times to count on the support and necessary cooperation of the different political and economic institutions.

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