



The Holy See

*Discurso al Embajador de BRASIL,
Excmo. Sr. Don Gilberto COUTINHO PARANHOS VELLOSO**

2 de abril de 1990

Mr. Ambassador,

1. It is a joy for me to welcome you at this time when I have the pleasure to receive Your Excellency here in the Vatican, as you present your Letters of Credence as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Federal Republic of Brazil to the Holy See.

This happy occasion offers me the chance to experience once again the feelings of spiritual closeness which the Brazilian people nurture for the Successor of Peter; at the same time it gives me the opportunity to reiterate the expression of my sincere affection for that people and my esteem for your noble Nation.

I thank you heartily for the kind words which you addressed to me. I am especially thankful for the deferential thoughts and the greeting which the President of the Republic, Dr Fernando Collor, wished to extend to me. I ask Your Excellency to kindly return the greeting on my part with my best wishes.

2. Your Excellency referred to a period of hope which your country is experiencing and to the longing of your people for a renewal of Brazilian society. To this correspond intentions of commitment and dedication which the leaders of national life profess in the matter of eliminating social inequalities and directing the pace of real progress so that Brazil may take its rightful place in the concert of peoples.

I think I can say that the same hope brightens the confident eyes of the world which are turned at this time towards your country— continent. This is at least the feeling of the Church and these are my sincere wishes: that each Brazilian see himself as an active subject of that hope, so as to find the courage and the generosity for those efforts which demand that everyone overcome the contrasts to which Your Excellency alluded; and so as to improve the conditions of life for

everyone, sharing in the common good which, in its proper conception, always has the human person at its centre.

3. Your Excellency stressed the friendly ties which have existed in the past and continue between the Holy See and the Federal Republic of Brazil. An indication of this is the good reciprocal relationship which was eminently carried on here by your illustrious predecessors, in whose footsteps Your Excellency has indicated a desire to continue as you carry out your high mandate. I can assure you that same goodwill persists on the part of this Apostolic See, so that the Church may continue in the mission which is proper to her in the land of Brazil in service to people, which is always the path the Church takes.

Concerning the Brazilians, I have within me and I keep alive the pleasant memory of my pastoral pilgrimage to Brazil about 10 years ago, to which Your Excellency alluded in kind terms which I am grateful for. I hope that, in his Providence, God will grant me the opportunity to repeat that pilgrimage. It would be a cause for joy for me to meet once again the dear Brazilian people, who remain very present in my heart and whom I mention in my prayers during this year in unison with my Brother Bishops of Brazil who are making the visit «ad limina Apostolorum».

4. On another topic Your Excellency called to mind the contribution of this Apostolic See towards cooperation in solidarity, which is increasingly becoming an obligation for the human family so that the common good on a worldwide level may be advanced through efforts to make differences less rigid and to make the establishment of a fruitful dialogue easier, towards a peace which is less threatened and bears the marks of «peace with order».

This is an issue which regards the basic aspirations of every person and goals which can be reached only by taking the path of respect for human rights. This path, in its turn, needs to be lighted by those universal principles which make the coexistence of all easier, in a climate of fraternal relations and with recognition of the dignity of persons who are open to transcendent values.

A more perfect temporal order, as you know, will be obtained only in the measure in which programmes of material development are accompanied by spiritual and moral development which embrace the cultural, transcendent and religious dimensions of the person and society (cf Encyc. *Sollicitudo rei socialis* n. 46). A civilization of a purely materialistic stamp condemns the human person in his struggle for survival to constant conflict which involves the ambiguity between personal development and the multiplication of things, a nervous jumping about between «being more» and «having more» (cf. Encyc. *Redemptor hominis*, n. 16). From this comes everyone's obligation to have an honest relationship with the truth about the human person himself and about the world.

5. Viewing the panorama of the Latin American continent, in particular the view which Brazil offers

us at this moment, I express the wish that, faithful to the values of your rich spiritual patrimony and with the cooperation of all groups in your society, the difficulties of the present moment will be overcome. Your Excellency made the point that your Nation is young, that it believes in itself, is full of hope in a better tomorrow, aware of its future and committed to freeing itself from the shackles on its development and to realizing what everyone desires.

To reach the goals of development and progress that have been set, solidarity, as you know, is indispensable, as much within the nation as on the international level. Such solidarity, on the ethical level, demands the avoidance of abuses of freedom on everyone's part, and also demands that all unite in the 'firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good', in a way that everyone may feel truly responsible for all (cf. *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, n. 38).

At the economic level, for example, it is necessary to evoke a solidarity which, at a regional, national and international level – respecting justice and equality – allows this truth to prevail: that the goods of this world were created with the purpose of serving all persons and all peoples.

Within this framework, two great challenges present themselves in Brazil at this time, as is happening also in other countries, which call for solidarity: that of the external debt which so discourages legitimate aspirations and slows down the rate of development; and that of defense of the global environment and of the use of its many natural resources, with prudent moderation.

6. In order to meet the indispensable efforts which they require of you, your nation can count on its great values. Among others, the Christian principles, which inspire its identity, its traditional virtues and its own institutions. Solidarity, already very valuable on a strictly human plane, grows when it passes over to the Christian plane, with the consideration that all people are equal before God as beings created «in his image and likeness» and that all are called to be his sons and daughters in Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of humankind.

Sharing, therefore, the experiences of Brazilians, I wish to assure you, Your Excellency, of the Church's firm wish to collaborate in your mission, and in all initiatives which can serve the cause of «the men and women of today and the people of today». Thus she will move ahead in her commitment to develop awareness that the values of peace, freedom, solidarity and defence of those most in need must inspire both private and public life. The faith and commitment to Jesus Christ demand of the Catholic faithful in Brazil as well that they become instruments of reconciliation and brotherhood, in truth, in justice and in love.

Mr. Ambassador:

Before concluding this meeting, I restate my request that you transmit to the President of the Republic my best wishes. And I wish to tell Your Excellency that you can count on the esteem, the warm welcome and the support of this Apostolic See as you carry out your high duties, which I

hope will be enjoyable and rich in results and happiness.

My thoughts turn at this time to all Brazilians, and to those who lead them towards the future. I wish happiness to all, with increasing progress and prosperity. I am sure that Your Excellency will transmit my feelings and my hopes. And, through the intercession of Our Lady Aparecida, I call down upon you, your mandate and your family members, as well as upon all the beloved sons and daughters of the noble nation of Brazil, abundant blessings from Almighty God.

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