



The Holy See

***DISCURSO DEL SANTO PADRE JUAN PABLO II
AL SEÑOR LUIS ÁNGEL CASATI FERRO,
EMBAJADOR DE PARAGUAY ANTE LA SANTA SEDE****

Lunes 11 de noviembre de 1991

Mr. Ambassador,

I am particularly gratified by the friendly words which you have addressed to me in this ceremony of the presentation of your Letters of Credence as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Paraguay to the Holy See. They recall for me the different stops throughout the length and breadth of your country during my apostolic visit. I recall that unforgettable journey, during which Paraguayan Catholics expressed their faith and hope in heartfelt celebrations and meetings and in which they also manifested their loyalty and closeness to the Successor of Peter.

Above all, I thank you for the respectful greetings on the part of the President of the Republic, as well as the courteous regards you have expressed for this Apostolic See, which also testify to the sincere sentiments of the Paraguayan people.

In the three years which have transpired since my pastoral visit to Paraguay important changes in your country have taken place, giving rise to a progressive transformation of its social-political institutions and structures. In this respect, the Holy See follows this evolution with particular attention and cannot but encourage and congratulate the Paraguayan people for their civic maturity which has strengthened the democratic process.

In this process, the National Constituent Convention has stood out since its foundation, to which many persons of good will in your country have devoted themselves with dedication and generosity. I pray that those participating in the elaboration of the new Magna Carta of the nation will be able to give appropriate expression to the legitimate aspirations of the beloved Paraguayan people. In this way, a solid foundation will be laid for building a society based upon the principles

of social justice and liberty, with full respect for human rights.

To achieve these objectives, it is necessary to co-ordinate the legitimate rights of all citizens in a common endeavour of peaceful co-existence. These desires are expressed by the words of the Bishops of Paraguay in their recent joint document: «All of us want to achieve and contribute something so that a new Paraguay will be realized through justice, liberty, employment, equality before the law, and solidarity among all» (Instrucción Pastoral sobre el Matrimonio y la Familia, 8 September 1991, n. 3). But building a more just, fraternal, and united society requires that the Christian concept of life and the moral teachings of the Church continue to be the essential values which inspire those persons and groups which work for the good of the nation. In this way, one will be able to respond adequately to human needs and aspirations, while at the same time cooperating with the true designs of God.

The Government which you have the honour to represent, Mr. Ambassador, has manifested its intention of achieving a state of law with the restoration of participatory democracy, both on the political level as well as the economic. This means it is necessary to reconcile political activity with ethical values, since according to the wise tradition of principles based on Christian ethics, the maintenance and exercise of public power cannot be conceived as the result of conflicting egotistical interests, but must be motivated by a sincere and effective vocation to serve the common good. It is always necessary to defend and protect those fundamental values of social life, such as respect for truth and justice, and the commitment to peace and freedom. The challenges of the future are many and represent obstacles which will not always be easy to overcome. But this should not cause discouragement, since Paraguay can also count on the greatest riches a people can have: the faith of the people. As I had the occasion to note during my apostolic visit to your country: «The Christian roots of your people, joined to the hope that comes from your human and spiritual resources, will make each one desire solidarity, generous commitment, mutual respect, ongoing dialogue. Thus Paraguay may advance more and more towards its objectives of progress through peace, concord and equality among its citizens, without any distinction of origin or social condition» (Address to the «Builders of Society», Asuncion, 17 May 1988, n. 7).

I want to reiterate, Mr. Ambassador, the professed willingness of the Church in Paraguay to collaborate - within the framework of her proper religious and moral mission - with the authorities and different institutions of the country in promoting all that works to the greater good of the human person and social groups, especially the less fortunate. I can assure you that the Bishops, priests and religious communities, motivated by a desire to give Gospel witness, without yielding to passing or one-sided interests, will continue to make their valuable contribution in those important fields such as education health, and service to indigenous peoples, farm workers, and those most in need. This was stated dearly by the Paraguayan Episcopate in its Pastoral Letter *Una Constitución para nuestro pueblo* (Asuncion, 18 September 1991).

At this time, so close to the solemn commemoration of the Fifth centenary of the coming of the Gospel to the New World, I also wish to recall with emotion and gratitude the evangelizing spirit of the missionaries who first came to the land of Paraguay. The experience of the Jesuit reducciones, which have been immortalized by your country, continues to be a bright witness for all those who want to build a society of greater justice and solidarity, which improves the lot of the less fortunate.

The example of self-sacrifice of St Roque Gonzalez and his companion martyrs, whom I had the joy of canonizing during the great meeting in Campo Nu Guazu, can be the valuable stimulus for those Christians of your country who ardently aspire to live in a reconciled and fraternal nation.

Mr. Ambassador, before concluding this meeting, I want to assure you of my esteem and support, together with my best wishes, that the mission you begin today may be fruitful for the good of Paraguay. I pray that you will convey my sentiments and hope to the Government and the other institutions of your country. At the same time, through the intercession of the Virgin of Caacupé, I invoke the blessing of God on you, your family and collaborators, and on all the beloved children of the noble Paraguayan nation, who are very close to the heart of the Pope.

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