



## The Holy See

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***DISCURSO DEL PAPA JUAN PABLO II  
AL SEÑOR CARLOS URRUTIA APARICIO,  
NUEVO EMBAJADOR DE GUATEMALA ANTE LA SANTA SEDE\****

*Sábado 14 de septiembre de 1991*

Mr. Ambassador,

I am pleased to receive the Letters of Credence which accredit you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Guatemala to the Holy See. Thus you come to occupy a place in the succession of Representatives of your Nation in the noble mission of maintaining and strengthening relations between the Apostolic See and the Nation of Guatemala which is always so near to me in my pastoral concern and affection.

I am pleased to know that the authorities of your Nation are working to build solid foundations which allow the establishment of a more just participative social order. During my pastoral visit to Guatemala, to which you so kindly referred, I was able to appreciate the genuine values which mark the people of Guatemala, the large majority of whom are members of the Catholic Church: their hospitable and generous solidarity, their tenacity and resistance in the face of adversity, their noble Christian roots and their closeness to the Successor of Peter. At the same time, however, I was able to note the serious problems which have tried – and still do – the temper of that beloved people and which makes it difficult for them to fulfil their legitimate aspirations for a more dignified life in peaceful coexistence and social justice. In the meeting with the masses which took place in the capital's Campo de Marte during my unforgettable apostolic visit, I stressed that they should give particular importance «to countering any form of extremism and consolidating an authentic peace, nothing better than which could devolve on the dignity of those who suffer injustice, disdain and poverty» (Homily of 7 March 1983).

Not so many years ago the Catholic Church in Guatemala suffered the ravages of violence, and she can count among her sons and daughters quite a few priests, religious and many catechists

who shed their blood as a witness of their fidelity to the Gospel and their nearness to the neediest. She has not ceased making repeated calls for peace and justice. Of special importance has been her contribution to the process of bringing peace to the Central American region. In the shadow of the Christ of Esquipulas treaties have matured which have made possible greater dialogue and understanding between conflicting parties and which aim at overcoming the difficulties and antagonism which such a tragic trail of death and destruction has brought with it. Along the same lines of service and as a demand of the mission which is hers, the Catholic Church is giving determined support to the National Commission for Reconciliation which Bishop Rodolfo Quezada Toruno President of the Guatemalan Episcopal Conference, presides over as a Conciliator.

There are many deep ties which have united Guatemala with the Apostolic See from the beginning of the country's origins. On this occasion, I want to express to you, Mr. Ambassador, the Church's determined desire to collaborate – within the scope of her religious and moral mission – with the authorities and the various bodies of your country in promoting everything which redounds to the greater good of the human person and of social groups, especially of the most needy. In this regard, I recall the unforgettable meeting I had with the indigenous communities in Quetzaltenango, and I want to express anew my wish that their legitimate rights will be protected and that the genuine values of their cultures will be adequately promoted (cf. Address in Quetzaltenango, 7 March 1983, n. 4).

On the other hand, no effort should be spared in defending and promoting the factors which create cohesiveness and promote unity and solidarity among the people of Guatemala. Therefore, it is necessary to pay particular attention to anything that could be a cause of division and discord. In this regard, and because of their pastoral responsibility, the Bishops of Guatemala have not ceased pointing out the danger represented by the proselytizing activity of fundamentalist sects. In a Pastoral Letter on the relationship between the Catholic Church and Non-Catholic religious groups, the Metropolitan Archbishop pointed out some of the problems deriving from this proselytizing activity, «such as the breakdown of family unity, the loss of a cultural identity and, perhaps the most serious of all, the loss of a profoundly communal and specifically human sense which exists in the Guatemalan people» (Pastoral Letter *Signo de Verdad y Esperanza* [Sign of Truth and Hope], 6 January 1989, n. 17.3)

My fervent wish is that the sons and daughters of the beloved Guatemalan nation, faithful to their most noble traditions and their Christian roots, may walk the path of reconciliation and fraternity in a determined common effort to achieve the defeat of imbalance and division. With the consolidation of the democratic institutions which its Government represents and with the generous activity of all citizens, may it establish a more just social order so that the legitimate rights of each person will be protected and the society will enjoy stability and harmony.

Mr. Ambassador, before ending this meeting, I want to assure you of my good will and support that the noble mission you have begun may be successful. Through the intercession of Our Lady of the

Assumption, Patroness of Guatemala, I pray that with his gifts the Most High may always assist you, your distinguished family, those who govern your noble Nation, as well as the beloved Guatemalan people, whom I always remember with particular affection.

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