



The Holy See

*Discours au Président du MEXIQUE,
S.E.M. Ernesto Zedillo PONCE DE LEON**

1° février 1996

1. I am very pleased today to receive the Constitutional President of the United Mexican States, accompanied by his distinguished entourage. As I express my deep gratitude to you for this visit, which emphasizes your closeness to and respect for the Apostolic See, I am pleased to address a deferential greeting to you as well as my most cordial welcome.

This meeting – which reminds me with pleasure of my Pastoral Visits to your nation, during which I was able to become acquainted with the moral and cultural values and deep piety of the Mexican people – is the first to take place since diplomatic relations were established between Mexico and the Holy See. Your presence here, Mr. President, not only expresses your noble personal sentiments, but first and foremost reflects the friendly atmosphere of these relations, and at the same time demonstrates the respectful and loyal collaboration between the local Church and the State, for the spiritual good of the Mexican people, who long for progress and the full integration of their country into the concert of nations.

2. In this regard, I have followed with keen interest the events of your country's political and social life, in which a series of significant changes have recently taken place that must be recognized and emphasized. Prominent among these changes are the improvement of the electoral law and the agreement reached between political groups and social organizations in favour of a more democratic and participatory political system.

The way undertaken must confront many challenges if it is to strengthen a climate of peaceful and harmonious coexistence between all, gaining the citizens' trust in the various public institutions and bodies. These must at all times consider and encourage the common good as a priority objective, so that even in Mexico's current political system, government action must prevail over special interests and remain free from any partisan concern by always seeking the country's good.

In this way situations of conflict can be resolved through dialogue and respect for the distinctive characteristics of ethnic minorities. This will allow them to enjoy an atmosphere of peace and true prosperity, and protect them from all forms of violence and outside interference.

3. The Holy See also follows closely the effort of the Mexican authorities to promote a suitable economic and social development in ways that improve the citizens' quality of life. They should always be inspired by ethical principles, guaranteeing in particular an equitable and even necessary contribution of effort and sacrifice by all.

With regard to a programme of economic stability, it is the public authorities' duty to seek middle and long-term solutions, ensuring that the most disadvantaged sectors of society – those with the least economic resources, the campesinos, the indigenous people, youth and the unemployed – are not burdened with the heaviest part of the economic readjustments and are thus able to live in a more dignified manner.

In this context, it is necessary to strengthen the values most basic to social harmony, such as the protection of life, respect for truth, a determined commitment to justice and solidarity, honesty, the capacity for dialogue and participation at all levels. It is a question of promoting and establishing those conditions of life which enable individuals and families, as well as intermediate groups and associations, to be fulfilled and to achieve their legitimate aspirations.

In view of the serious problem of demographic growth, programmes and solutions which particularly respect the dignity of the person, the authentic advancement of women and the rights of children are necessary. In this area, it is desirable that the State and other public institutions offer concrete and effective collaboration in the important work which the Church in Mexico is carrying out in the Catholic educational centres, aimed at forming consciences in true, undeniable spiritual and human values.

4. I also wish to assure you, Mr. President, of the Church's firm intention to continue to co operate with the authorities and the various public institutions in supporting the great causes of man, as a citizen and child of God (cf. *Gaudium et spes*, n. 76). It is to be hoped that constructive and frequent dialogue between the civil authorities and Pastors of the Church will strengthen relations between the two institutions. For its part, the Bishops, priests and religious communities will tirelessly continue their work of evangelization, social assistance and education for the good of society. Their motivation lies in their vocation to serve all, especially the neediest, thus contributing to the overall advancement of the Mexican people and to the defence and promotion of the highest values.

Before ending this meeting, I would again like to express to you, Mr. President, my sincere gratitude for this friendly visit. I deeply hope that your personal commitment and that of your government will achieve the objectives you have set to foster the modern development of Mexico

on the basis of the ethical values so deeply rooted in the people's religious and cultural tradition. Spiritually prostrate before the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother and spiritual guide of Mexicans, I fervently ask the Almighty to shower abundant gifts and blessings on you, Mr. President, on your distinguished family and coworkers in the Government, and on the beloved children of this noble country.

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