



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. Mr José Cuadra Chamorro,
AMBASSADOR OF NICARAGUA TO THE HOLY SEE***

Monday, 24 March 1997

Mr Ambassador,

1. With great pleasure I offer you my cordial welcome today at the presentation of your Letters of Credence accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Nicaragua to the Holy See. With deep gratitude I return the affectionate greetings which Dr Arnaldo Alemán Lacayo, President of the Republic, conveys to me through you, and I kindly ask you to express my best wishes to him for the prosperity and spiritual well-being of the people of the beloved Nicaraguan land.

2. Your presence here prompts me to recall with deep feeling 7 February last year, when I had the opportunity to make my second Pastoral Visit to this beloved country. On that occasion, when Nicaraguans were able to meet the Successor of the Apostle Peter and freely express their support and affection to him, I was able to see that “new and important pages have been written in your national history and many circumstances have changed” (*Arrival address in Managua*, n. 1; *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, 14 February 1996, p. 4). Indeed it is encouraging to observe how the transition to a new order gradually leads to greater consolidation of a state of law, in which personal freedoms are increasingly guaranteed, and, at the same time, helps instil in citizens trust in the public institutions so that everyone will collaborate more actively and participate responsibly in the common good (cf. *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, n. 44), by an effort to restore peace and achieve reconciliation, as well as by the effective, although difficult, social reintegration of former soldiers through programmes for them and for the areas affected by the conflict.

3. In Nicaragua, Mr Ambassador, the road to establishing a stable democracy, which will guarantee the harmonious promotion of human rights for all, is conditioned, as in other areas of the American continent, by economic collapse and social crisis. These especially affect those with limited material resources, who are also exposed to widespread unemployment and are often the victims of administrative corruption and many forms of violence. It should not be forgotten that economic imbalances likewise contribute to the gradual deterioration and loss of moral values. Among their effects are family breakdown, social permissiveness and little respect for life.

In this regard, among the priorities of the present time there is an urgent need to recover the above-mentioned values through political and social measures that encourage decent, steady employment for all, so that the material poverty in which many of the inhabitants live will be overcome, the family institution will be strengthened and access to education for all classes of the population will be fostered. On these lines, it is inescapable that special care be given to education by developing a genuine policy to strengthen and spread those moral and spiritual values that are basic to a truly human society which, like yours, is rooted in Christian principles. Thus a contribution will be made to enabling the Nicaraguan people, so rich in human and traditional values, to live in peace, through progress and the appropriate spiritual, cultural and material development in an atmosphere of social justice and solidarity. Indeed, this cannot be reduced to a vague emotional sentiment or an empty word. Solidarity demands an active moral commitment, a firm and constant determination to devote oneself to the common good, that is, to the good of one and all, because we are all responsible for one another (cf. *ibid.*, nn. 39-40).

4. During my two visits to your country, I could appreciate that the noble Nicaraguan people have been entrusted with a rich heritage of faith. This spiritual heritage, enhanced by the various expressions of popular piety down the ages, is one which the Bishops, together with their priests and Nicaragua's different religious communities, wish to preserve and increase through the new evangelization. The whole Church, as she faces the third millennium of the Christian era, is committed to presenting with new ardour the salvation that Jesus Christ brings to all people. In this regard, your national authorities can continue to rely on the loyal collaboration of the Church's Pastors and of the Catholic faithful in their own fields of activity, so that everyone will be more aware of his responsibility to improve living conditions for all (cf. *Gaudium et spes*, n. 57), since integral service to man is also part of the Church's mission.

5. In the Central American isthmus, Nicaragua coexists with the other countries of the area, whose deep bonds of faith, language, culture and history do not diminish their national identity. In this regard, the local Church, with her work of evangelization, has endeavoured to promote reconciliation and to foster a more democratic social process, especially after certain periods which saw ideological clashes and fratricidal conflicts that have left their sad consequences of death and hatred. In this regard, the Church herself would like to continue to offer her collaboration so that values such as justice and solidarity may always be present in the life of this region's nations.

For this reason the Holy See likewise follows with appreciation and interest the process of Central American integration. In a context of increasingly powerful political and economic associations, there is a growing need for greater solidarity between the countries of the isthmus, called to struggle together against poverty, unemployment and other evils that threaten its stability and welfare. The international community for its part, as I had the opportunity to recall in the above-mentioned visit, must help by offering its collaboration, as in the past, so that through effective aid and exchange programmes better conditions may be created for all (cf. *Farewell address in Managua*, 7 February 1996, n. 3; *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, 14 February 1996, p. 8).

6. Before concluding this ceremony, Mr Ambassador, I would like to offer you my best wishes that your mission, which begins today, may yield abundant and lasting fruit. I ask you please to convey my sentiments and hopes to the President and the other authorities of the Republic, as I invoke abundant blessings from the Most High on you, your distinguished family and your staff, as well as on all the children of the noble Nicaraguan nation, whom I commend to the constant motherly intercession of the Virgin Mary, so venerated there under the title of the Most Pure Conception of Mary.

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