



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. MR CARLOS RAFAEL CONRADO MARION-LANDAIS,
AMBASSADOR OF THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC***

Monday, 15 December 2003

Mr Ambassador,

I receive you with great pleasure for this solemn act of the presentation of the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Dominican Republic to the Holy See, and I thank you warmly for your kind words. I am most grateful for your congratulations on the recent 25th Anniversary of my election to the Chair of St Peter, to which the Supreme Pastor wished to call me to carry out this service to the Church, and by extension, to humanity. I am therefore grateful to you for your prayers that God will comfort me with his help in the exercise of my ecclesial ministry. Your Excellency, you have come to represent a Nation which, as you recalled in your address, feels profoundly Catholic. On the soil of that land, known today as the Dominican Republic, at the very beginning of the evangelization of the American Continent, the first Mass was celebrated and later the first Baptism was administered to the Indigenous people. With these two sacraments the Church of Christ grew and was built up, so it can be said that the Island of Hispaniola was the birthplace of the Catholic Church in America. From there, it was not long before evangelizers set sail for the American mainland; they were the men who left to proclaim Jesus Christ, to defend the inviolable dignity and rights of the native peoples and encourage their integral promotion and brotherhood among all members of the great human family. In a relatively short period the paths of the faith were to cross the geography of the Dominican Republic. At the very beginning of the 16th century, Pope Julius II established in the Island of Hispaniola the Metropolitan Church of Yaguatae, with Bainoa and Maguá as suffragans, the first in the New World. However, shortly afterwards these Dioceses were suppressed, and on 8 August 1511, the same Pontiff established permanently the Dioceses of Santo Domingo, Concepción de la Vega and San Juan as suffragans of the Metropolitan See of Seville. To celebrate its quincentenary, the Dominican Bishops are preparing a National Plan for the Pastoral Care of Evangelization, which I hope will bear the best of fruit. Throughout these 500 years the Church has accompanied the Dominican people on their way, proclaiming to them the Christian principles which are a source of sound hope and endowing society with renewed dynamism. She has carried out her work of evangelization and human advancement, tasks that are not diametrically opposed but closely connected, since "human development must be the logical consequence of evangelization, which aims at the total

liberation of the human person" (John Paul II, *Address for the Opening of the Fourth General Conference of the Latin American Bishops*, Santo Domingo, 12 October 1992, n. 13; *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition [ORE], 21 October 1992, p. 8). The Holy See is pleased with the good relations that exist between the Church and the State and fervently hopes that they will continue to be built up in the future. There is a broad area in which their specific competencies and activities converge and interrelate, as the Second Vatican Council recognized. It is right to recognize the action carried out in your Country through the dioceses, parishes, religious communities and apostolic movements. In this regard, I would like to mention the Church's action for the disabled, persons with AIDS, ethnic minorities, emigrants and refugees.

Another cause of pleasure is the presence of the Church in the area of education through the Pontifical University in Santiago with a branch in the capital city, four Catholic universities, various technical institutes, polytechnics for women and almost 300 parish educational centres and schools. In addition, other institutions of the Catholic Church make an important contribution to the common effort to form a society that is more just and attentive to the needs of its weakest members. Nonetheless, in her service to society, it is not incumbent on the Church to propose political or technical solutions. However, she can and must point out the motivations and orientations that stem from the Gospel in order to enlighten the search for responses and solutions. The rejection or forgetfulness of the genuine ethical, spiritual and transcendent values is usually at the root of the social, economic and political evils of peoples. The mission of the Church is to recall, defend and reinforce these values, particularly in this day and age when in your Country internal and external causes have led to a serious deterioration and marked decline in the quality of life of Dominicans. In solving these problems it must not be forgotten that the common good is the goal for which to aim. To this end, the Church, claiming no competence in areas foreign to her mission, cooperates with the Government and with society. In the contemporary world it is not enough to abide by the law of the market and globalization. We must encourage solidarity and keep clear of the evils that derive from capitalism that sets money before people and makes people the victims of so many injustices. No model of development could prosper that failed to take these inequalities into account and tackle them with determination. In crises, those who suffer the worst are always the poor. They must therefore be the object of priority attention on the part of the State. The fight against poverty must not be reduced merely to improving the standard of living, but must improve this situation by creating sources of employment and by making this cause one's own. It is important to stress the significant role of education and training as a means to fight poverty, as well as respect for fundamental rights that cannot be sacrificed for the sake of other goals, since this would undermine the essential dignity of the human being. Before concluding this meeting, Mr Ambassador, I should like to express my closeness to all those affected by the earthquake last September and by the recent floods. I praise the effective solidarity of the other regions of the Dominican Republic and other Caribbean countries. I ask the Lord to grant the victims fortitude and the ability to surmount the damage suffered with generous commitment, and may the help they need to continue life as normal arrive without delay. Lastly, I would like to express my very best wishes that your mission which begins today will be a great success. I ask you again kindly to express my sentiments and hopes to the President of the Republic and to the other Authorities of your Country. Through the intercession of Our Lady, Virgin of Altagracia, venerated here since 1541, who accompanies the faithful of this noble Nation with her loving presence, I invoke God's Blessing upon you, your distinguished family and collaborators, and the beloved sons and daughters of the Dominican

Republic.

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