



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO BOGOTA

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER PAUL VI TO THE PRESIDENT OF COLOMBIA*

Friday, 23 August 1968

Mr President,

We thank you profoundly for according Us such a courteous reception. It is in harmony with your cordiality and it reflects the relations happily existing between Colombia and the Holy See. It also places in evidence the sentiments and the religious course of your noble Nation.

So many names and dates bound up with the glorious national history, evoke the operative presence of the Church which has rights of citizenship in this beloved country from the dawn of the discovery of the New World, when Spain and Portugal began to leave the Christian imprint of their historic enterprise on this continent, from the days of Saint Luis Beltran, the indefatigable evangelizer, and Saint Peter Claver, the Apostle of Cartagena. Does not the name itself of Santa Fe de Bogotá, the point of convergence of territorial unification, indicate that a people began to rise united also by faith? Templo de la Vera Cruz, the National Pantheon where the ashes of the fathers of independence rest, and the other, Villa del Rosario, where the Constitution of Greater Colombia was signed: are not these a testimony of the fact that the Church played a leading role in the formation and to the exploits of the national spirit? How can We fail to recall the influence that the Church, through her parishes, universities, schools and welfare works, has exercised and still exercises in the life and the moral uplifting of Colombia?

The Church which formed citizens of upright probity, of solid personal and civic virtues, continues its attitude of service, offering a living faith, true objectives, moral norms which exult man and society, temper right and strong characters, protect the untouchable and universal rights of liberty and justice, open the conscience in order to act honestly without indifference, make more operative the responsibility of everyone, give to the urgent social problems clear orientation and vigorous postulates for their equitable solution, maintain and consolidate in mutual respect of

individuals and families, the living together within national frontiers, and protect it into the harmonious and constructive concert of peoples.

We desire and ask God for beautiful Colombia of pure traditions that the moral and religious principles continue to have an influence, with decisive and forceful collaboration of minds and wills, on the personal and social environment; that they may continue to direct and inspire those, as Your Excellency, who live and strive with a view to a Colombia more prosperous and secure, more just in its industries and its agriculture, more committed in the further spiritual and material promotion of each level of society.

With these ardent wishes We are pleased to impart to Your Excellency and to all those present here the Apostolic Benediction which We extend to all the beloved Colombians.

*ORa n.23 p.11.