



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II TO H.E. MR RAIMUNDO EMILIANI ROMAN, NEW AMBASSADOR OF COLOMBIA TO THE HOLY SEE*

Monday, 9 April 1979

Mr Ambassador, I welcome Your Excellency who, presenting the Letters of Credence today, begin your mission as Colombia's Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Holy See. Thank you for your cordial expressions of gratitude and devotion to this Apostolic See. Through them, I have the joy also of feeling the human and religious closeness of a whole noble nation, Colombia, whose present course, like its past history, undoubtedly continues to benefit from a cultural and moral heritage and from communion in faith, a fruit of the centuries-old evangelizing presence of the Church. In this connection, I wish to express my sincere satisfaction that people in your country have been able to appreciate to a large extent these values of the spirit, in that they constitute a good part of a solid foundation for the common good and for progress, as was reflected in the last and recent Concordat signed with the Holy See. Saying this, I wish to reaffirm, on the part of the Church, the decided will for collaboration and likewise the resolution to serve man in conformity with the mission received from her divine Founder. This was also, nor could it be otherwise, my constant thought during my first pastoral visit to Latin America: to proclaim in a loud voice the binding commitment of serving man so as to increase his dignity according to God's plan, to improve him gradually by means of the effort of his own intelligence and will; in a word, to save him. In this sense, allow me to express all my confidence both in the ecclesiastical Hierarchy and in the priests, religious, and laity of Colombia. I am well aware that their apostolic activity, owing to the fact that it is a responsible ecclesial service in favour of the person, not detached from his real needs and his rightful aspirations, aims in the temporal order solely at "permeating it with the spirit of the Gospel" (cf. *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 2). I congratulate them on this. To reduce the mission of the Church to a mere task of worship or devotion, would be as far from this spirit as to claim to assign to it as its primary, if not exclusive, aim that of fostering politico-social change by every means. The work of the Church takes place in a wider and vaster framework; her disinterested service, animated by active charity (cf. Mt 25:35 ff.), is directed above all at developing man, in the first place, in that which is of the greatest value within him and the source of his eminent dignity: the image of God. An image which, to be authentic, must be projected in all fields—professional, family, cultural, social...—in which the human person grows and is ennobled, being strengthened day by day in his direct experience, aimed at reaching a more and more just, united, and peaceful human community. In order that these desires may become a splendid reality in Colombia, I implore the constant assistance of the Almighty, to which I commend Your Excellency's mission, the authorities, and all the citizens of your beloved

country.

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