



The Holy See

VIAGGIO APOSTOLICO IN URUGUAY, CILE E ARGENTINA

DISCORSO DI GIOVANNI PAOLO II AI DIRIGENTI POLITICI ARGENTINI*

«Casa Rosada» - Buenos Aires

Lunedì, 6 aprile 1987

1. I am very pleased to have this significant meeting here in the Casa Rosada at the beginning of my second pastoral visit to this beloved nation of Argentina. With respect and esteem I greet His Excellency, the President of the Republic, and I thank him for his words of welcome; I also greet the members of the Supreme Court of Justice, the Ministers and State Secretaries, members of Congress, representatives of political parties, and other persons present here who fulfil their task in the service of their fellow citizens

I would also like to renew my gratitude to the Government for its kind invitation to return to Argentina, and also for its diligent and prompt assistance in all the phases of the preparation and development of this visit. My acknowledgment is extended to the entire nation, which has wanted once more to welcome the Pope with its traditional and renowned hospitality.

2. This visit, like the one five years ago and all my apostolic pilgrimage, takes place within the context of my apostolic ministry, that is, of the duty given by Christ himself to Peter and his successors throughout the centuries: to strengthen his brothers in the faith (cf. Lk 22:32).

This visit, however, has an added circumstance of extraordinary prominence as well as the usual pastoral reasons for my journeys. I come when the country is at peace in order to commemorate the happy outcome of the Papal mediation between the sister nations of Argentina and Chile in the conflict over the southern zone. Both countries have shown the world that, on the basis of their common historical, cultural and Christian roots and thanks to the determination of their governments and institutions to reach a peaceful agreement, it is possible to construct an honest,

solid and just peace. My presence here in the southern part of the American continent is also intended to consolidate even further the bonds of fraternity among the peoples of the great Latin American family.

3. Before those who rule the destinies of the country and who are fully engaged in political, juridical and administrative activity, I would like to testify today that the Church holds such an important task in great esteem. The Second Vatican Council affirms that politics «is a difficult yet noble art» (*Gaudium et spes*, 75). Political activity has an innate dignity; it is enough to consider its purpose, that is, to serve man and the community, and to promote unceasingly their rights and legitimate aspirations. From this, the pre eminence of the moral values and of the ethical dimension flows; this must be safeguarded, notwithstanding the contingencies of human activity and opposing interests.

Political power, which constitutes the natural and necessary bond to ensure that the social body remains a cohesive unit must have the common good as its goal.

It is true that not all the areas of personal and social life fall under the direct competency of politics. However, it is equally certain that one of the binding duties of this specific activity is, apart from the observance of the proper respect for the legitimate freedom of individuals, families and subsidiary groups, to create and empower for the benefit of all, social conditions which promote the authentic and total good of the person, whether as an individual or as a group. At the same time it must present whatever opposes or hinders the expression of the person's true dimensions or the exercise of his legitimate rights (cf. *Mater et Magistra*, 65).

Within this broad framework of conditions which shape the common good of civil society, it certainly is the State's responsibility to pay special attention to public morality, through suitable legislative, administrative and juridical resolutions. These will assure a social environment of respect for ethical norms, without which it is impossible for people to live together in a fitting manner. This is a particularly urgent task in contemporary society, which is suffering acutely from a serious crisis of values; this crisis causes negative repercussions in broad sectors in the life of the individual and of society itself. The immediate need for moral values which should animate the conduct of public authorities, is a decided option for truth, justice and freedom, which should be reflected in the institutional and legal instruments regulating the life of the citizens. Thus it is always the inalienable duty of the public authority to safeguard and promote human rights, even in situations of extreme conflict, overcoming the frequent temptation to answer violence with violence.

On the other hand, the continuous fostering of public morality is inseparable from the other functions of the State. In fact, we know very well that a progressive deterioration of public morality creates dangers, more or less hidden. against the rights and freedom of man, as well as against the security of the citizens; furthermore, it undermines important values of education and general

culture and, finally, weakens the ideals which give cohesion and meaning to the national life.

The full re establishment of democratic institutions is an ideal occasion for Argentinians to be ever more aware of their duty to participate responsibly in public life, each according to his or her own position. By exercising their rights and fulfilling their civic duties they contribute in a decisive manner to the common good of the country. May the country thus achieve a renewed sense of social fraternity, as befits living members of this great community which is the Argentinian nation!

4. The Church recognizes, respects and encourages the legitimate autonomy of temporal realities, and specifically of politics. Her mission places her on a different level: she is «a sign and a safeguard of the transcendent character of the human person» (*Gaudium et spes*, 76).

Nevertheless, the Christian message is the bearer of good news to all, even to the political, economic and juridical world. When the authority of the Church, within the context of her own mission, proclaims the Christian teaching or passes moral judgement on the realities of the political order, and when she strives for the promotion of the dignity and the inalienable rights of man, she seeks above all the total good of the political community, and, ultimately, the total good of the person. At the same time, the Church recognizes that the vast area of political questions belongs to the proper role of the Catholic laity, they must seek solutions which are compatible with Gospel values from among the different ones which are accepted and generally considered by politics. Together with all people who desire to promote the good of the community, they possess the great responsibility to seek and apply truly human solutions to the challenges which the new situations and new models of living together in society present. The Church shares in the best aspirations of people and she proposes to them what is properly theirs: «a global vision of man and of humanity» (*Populorum Progressio*, 13).

Both the State as well as the Church, each in its own area and with its own means, are at the service of the personal and social vocation of man. Thus, a vast area for dialogue and various forms of cooperation opens up, always starting, however, from mutual respect for the identity and functions of each of the two institutions.

The already long history of your country, bound by multiple bonds to the Christian heritage which it has received, shows this more than eloquently. During those years, favourable conditions were formed for the particularly fruitful collaboration of the Church and the political community. I hope that this reciprocal aid, understanding and respect will grow even more in the future. May its creativity and dynamism, manifested in adequate forms of cooperation, also be implemented for the good of political activity and reveal the integrating force of the activity, always with a transcendent finality, of the Church, «the expert in humanity», in the apt expression of my predecessor, Pope Paul VI.

The tireless pursuit of these goals shall redound to the great benefit of all the children of this land

and, by virtue of your characteristic openness to the rest of the world. It will constitute a precious and influential testimony to the noble design to build a civilization of truth, justice, love and freedom.

5. In these times of particular significance for the future of your country, you have enough reasons to look to the future with hope: you have the strength of a young nation with varied and rich historical experiences. I recommend this new stage of your national life to Almighty God, through the maternal intercession of Our Lady of Lujan, so that Argentina will approach the fifth centenary of the beginning of the evangelization of America and the third millennium of the Christian era with renewed maturity and wisdom, with a growing optimism and force. I am certain that this nation, which occupies a worthy place in the international community, will thus continue to bear many fruits of a human and Christian society here and throughout the world. May the blessing of the Almighty descend on you, your families, all your noble undertakings, and above all on all the men and women of Argentina, whom you desire to serve.

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