



The Holy See

***DISCURSO DEL SANTO PADRE JUAN PABLO II
AL SEÑOR MARCELO SANTOS VERA,
NUEVO EMBAJADOR DE ECUADOR ANTE LA SANTA SEDE****

Viernes 24 de febrero de 1995

Mr. Ambassador,

1. With great pleasure I receive you this morning on the solemn occasion of the presentation of the Letters of Credence accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Ecuador to the Holy See. In offering you my warmest welcome, I am pleased to reiterate in your presence the deep affection I feel for all the children of that noble nation.

I am sincerely grateful to return the deferential greeting which the President of the Republic, His Excellency Mr Sixto Duran Ballen, has been pleased to express to me through you, and I ask you to be sure to convey my best wishes to him and to assure him of my prayers to the Almighty for the prosperity and spiritual welfare of all Ecuadoreans.

2. Your friendly words were most welcome to me. In them you confirmed the sentiments of the Ecuadorean people particularly the witness of their renewed faith and fidelity to the Church. In fact, a few weeks ago it was the 10th anniversary of my unforgettable Pastoral Visit to your country, when I had the opportunity to become closely acquainted with the genuine values which belong to the Ecuadorean soul and to appreciate them. These values were expressed especially by the beloved and enlightening figures of St Mariana of Jesus, St Michael Febres Cordero and Blessed Narcisa, examples of holiness and a reason to rejoice for the whole Church and the nation of Ecuador in particular. That visit to the land where these blessed figures lived and where today the Church is just as flourishing as she was almost five centuries ago, thriving in the multitude of Christian communities, leaves me the pleasing image of a noble, hard-working and peace-loving people.

3. Of course, the tragic conflict between your country and Peru, to which you particularly referred

in your discourse, is a cause of deep concern to me.

When individuals and peoples maintain peaceful relations, they glorify God (cf. *Gaudium et spes*, n. 76). This is why the Church will not cease to make her contribution, calling Christians «to cooperate with all in securing a peace based on justice and charity and in promoting the means necessary to attain it, under the help of Christ, author of peace» (ibid., n. 77). In this respect, I entrust the eternal repose of those who died fighting to the Lord's mercy, and I am close to all those who are suffering the consequences of these clashes. I would like to express my satisfaction at the hope resulting from the signing of the Peace Declaration of Itamarty between Ecuador and Peru on 17 February, which was achieved thanks to the perseverance and help of the four guarantor countries.

I rejoice at the settlement reached by both parties in order to establish a climate of detente and friendship. I strongly urge them to put an end to all forms of hostility and to follow the way of dialogue, making use of the means established by international legislation for the peaceful solution of controversies that can arise between nations.

The Pastors of the Church will not fail to offer their collaboration through prayer campaigns, such as those sponsored by the Episcopate of the beloved American continent, the preaching of Gospel precepts and the means available and within their reach to encourage a real environment of peace, serenity and the effort for collaboration and peaceful understanding. As I explained in my address to the diplomats accredited to the Holy See, «I am convinced that though war and violence are alas, contagious peace is equally so» (Address to the Diplomatic Corps, *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, 11 January 1995, p. 6).

For my part, I would like to reiterate my deep conviction that «War is not inevitable; peace is possible! It is possible because man has a conscience and a heart. It is possible because God loves each one of us, just as each one is, so as to transform us and make him or her grow» (Address to the Diplomatic Corps, *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, 19 January 1994 p. 9).

4. In your address you also referred to the State's process of modernization. In this regard I would like to recall that for the implementation of truly integral progress it is also necessary to pay attention to culture and education. The recently promulgated Law of Educational Freedom for Families in Ecuador, is intended to guarantee the full exercise of freedom of religion, conscience and education. It is to be hoped that its application will contribute to the permanent promotion of an authentic cultural policy that consolidates and spreads the basic values of a society which, like that of Ecuador, is rooted in faith and Christian principles.

It is likewise to be hoped that the educational reform under way will be effective and make integral formation the legacy of all, facilitating the necessary conditions for young people fully to assume their responsibilities as citizens and active collaborators for the nation's common good.

5. Mr. Ambassador, the ties which have linked and still link Ecuador with the Church are many and solid. This is why I am pleased to reaffirm today that the Church's decisive intention, inspired by the desire for Gospel witness alien to passing or partisan interests, is to continue to provide aid in sectors as important as that of education, social assistance to the most underprivileged, health care services and the overall advancement of the person as a citizen and child of God. For this reason, the Pastors of the Church in Ecuador, in communion with the Successor of Peter, will continue to offer their words of guidance to all, because they spring from a deep knowledge of the human situation in Ecuador and of their mission to proclaim Christ's Gospel.

Before this meeting comes to an end, I would like to offer you my best wishes for the beginning of your mission today, that it may be rewarding and successful. I ask you kindly to convey my sentiments and hopes to the President of the Republic of Ecuador, as well as to your country's other authorities, as I invoke God's blessing and the gifts of the Spirit upon you, your family and your co-workers, and upon all the beloved children of the noble Ecuadorean nation, ever close to the Pope's heart.

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