



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. Mr. ESTEBAN JUAN CASELLI,
AMBASSADOR OF ARGENTINA TO THE HOLY SEE***

Friday, 20 June 1997

Mr Ambassador,

1. I am pleased to accept the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Argentine Republic to the Holy See.

I would like first of all to express my gratitude for the kind words you have just addressed to me. They express your noble intentions as your new mission in your country's service is beginning, and they witness to the sincere and cordial relations the Holy See maintains with Argentina. I would particularly like to thank you for the respectful greeting you have conveyed to me from President Carlos Saúl Menem, while at the same time I ask you to express to him my best wishes for peace and wellbeing, and for the prosperity and integral progress of all the sons and daughters of this noble nation.

2. I would like my words, Mr Ambassador, to be encouraging and full of hope now that the Argentine people are preparing to face the challenges of the third millennium. The future holds many challenges and presents obstacles that are not always easy to overcome; but difficulties must not be a reason for discouragement, since Argentina relies on a firm basis for the building of her future: her deep Christian roots, the eloquent legacy of 500 years of the Church's evangelizing presence in the lands of America.

At this time in the nation's life, the Church reaffirms her vocation of service to all men, imbuing culture with Christian meaning and enlightening the moral conscience of each individual so that his decisions may always take into account fundamental ethical values. In this way, the Church helps

to build a society in accordance with God's plan: a fraternal and reconciled society in which hard work, honesty and the spirit of sharing prevail; a society in which the basic rights of all citizens, especially those of the weakest, are safeguarded.

3. In the exercise of her mission, both in your own country and in the other places which she has reached, the Church pays special attention to the integral formation of the person and especially to that of children and the young, offering an education that is based on human principles and Christian morality. Argentine Catholics, especially those involved in teaching, are working with dedication to help the new generations, who represent the nation's future, to be aware of their duties regarding the common good and that cordial understanding among all which is so necessary for democratic life.

The Church considers that the constitutional State and the application of democratic principles, by which conflicts can be solved through negotiation and dialogue, are important for the preservation and exercise of human rights in the contemporary world, since they are never based on the moral relativism which has regrettably spread in our time. This relativism seeks to reject all certainty about the meaning of man's life and his basic dignity, which must be respected by all social institutions, and it fails to oppose the various ways this life and dignity are manipulated and disparaged, causing people to lose sight of what constitutes the noblest quality of democracy: the defence of the human person's incomparable value.

4. The Holy See appreciates the Argentine Government's commitment to promote the inalienable right to life by raising its voice, in a responsible and determined manner, at international forums, often in situations marked by the spread of an anti-life culture which in many cases is synonymous with the "culture of death" and presents recourse to abortion and euthanasia as a sign of progress and the achievement of freedom. Thus a common ethical effort is vitally necessary today in order to carry out an important pro-life strategy. This is the specific task of social leaders, whose duty it is to make courageous decisions in the defence of life, especially in the area of legislation, guaranteeing the support owed to the family, since "a family policy must be the basis and driving force of all social policies" (*Evangelium vitae*, n. 90).

In this regard, when many are seeking to spread an anti-birth mentality and an erroneous vision of sexuality, and demanding that the law authorize the abominable crime of abortion; when the threat of accepting genetic manipulation of the means of human reproduction is sometimes put forward, men and women of goodwill are called to support and promote the family institution and its irreplaceable basis which is — in accordance with the divine plan — indissoluble marriage between a man and a woman. It must not be forgotten that without stable families not only is ecclesial life weakened, but the common good of the nation deteriorates.

5. The development of peoples depends largely on their authentic integration in a world order based on solidarity. The Church's task is not so much to suggest concrete programmes of action,

which is not her responsibility, but to shed greater light on the moral conscience of political, economic and financial leaders. This is why she holds up the principle of solidarity as the basis for a true economy of communion and the sharing of goods, in the international as well as the national order. This solidarity requires an equitable sharing of the efforts to solve the problems of underdevelopment and the sacrifices necessary for overcoming economic crises, while keeping in mind the needs of the most defenceless peoples.

6. The efforts made in various parts of the country to raise the spiritual and material level of the citizens are praiseworthy. In this regard, as the Argentine Bishops also had the opportunity to point out, re-echoing the Magisterium, the Church maintains that such initiatives must be inspired by the moral values which are the basis of a peaceful and prosperous society and assure the best integral development of the members of the national community.

I would like to close my address by urging and encouraging all Argentine society to cultivate the virtues of prudence, fortitude, temperance and justice in public life. This attitude will be a sure guide in the faithful fulfilment of its own duty and responsibility, in order to overcome the problems that arise and to look with hope to the nation's future.

7. Mr Ambassador, as you begin to exercise the lofty function to which you have been appointed, I hope that your task will be fruitful and will help strengthen the good relations between this Apostolic See and the Argentine Republic. In this task you can always rely on the welcome and support of those who assist me. As I ask you to convey my sentiments and good wishes to the President of your country and to the dear Argentine people, I assure you of my prayers to the Almighty, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin of Luján, that with his gifts he may always assist you and your distinguished family, the embassy staff and your country's authorities and citizens, whom I always remember with special affection and on whom I invoke abundant blessings from the Lord.

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