



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. Mr HORACIO SÁNCHEZ UNZUETA,
NEW AMBASSADOR OF MEXICO TO THE HOLY SEE****

Saturday, 6 June 1998

Mr Ambassador,

1. I am pleased to extend a cordial welcome to you at this ceremony for the presentation of the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Mexico to this Apostolic See. With sincere gratitude I return the affectionate greeting that you have brought from the President of the Republic, Dr Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León, and I ask you to convey to him my best wishes for the prosperity and spiritual welfare of his person and of all the inhabitants of the beloved Mexican nation.

2. Your presence here is a pleasant reminder of my Pastoral Visits to your beloved country, during which I was able to see, in addition to the warm welcome, hospitality and many signs of affection, the great efforts being made to fulfil its historic vocation.

I am also thinking of my next journey to Mexico City to deliver the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation connected with the Special Assembly for America of the Synod of Bishops, held in Rome in 1997. I will also have the welcome opportunity to walk again on Mexican soil, to meet its people and its authorities. For several days Mexico City will be the pastoral capital of the Americas and the privileged witness to a historic stage in the progress of the new evangelization on the American continent and throughout the world.

3. Because of Mexico's geographical position on the American continent, which enables it to share in various cultural, scientific and economic trends that are often creative and open to the future, it is called to be an instrument of peace and dialogue between the peoples of the North and South, between developed and developing countries, between ancient and new cultures. To fulfil this task, Mexico can offer all the wealth of its spiritual and cultural heritage, which has deep Christian roots, and thus contribute to the progress of American society with development that takes into account the

human dimension which is so necessary for guaranteeing a future truly worthy of the human person.

4. Mr Ambassador, in Mexico progress in strengthening and harmoniously promoting the human rights of all is conditioned, among other things, by economic imbalances and social crises, as in various areas of the American continent. This particularly affects people with limited material resources, who are also the most vulnerable to unemployment and often the victims of corruption and many other forms of violence. It must not be forgotten that economic imbalances contribute to the progressive decline and loss of moral values, which is apparent in the break-up of families, moral permissiveness and the lack of respect for life.

To reclaim these moral values, which are necessary for society as a whole, the priorities of the moment must include political and social measures that encourage dignified and stable employment for everyone, in order to overcome the material poverty that threatens so many inhabitants. It is also essential to devote special attention to the education of the new generations by developing an educational policy that strengthens and defends these fundamental values. This will contribute to the spiritual, cultural and material progress of the Mexican people, in an atmosphere of social justice and solidarity. The latter cannot be reduced to a vague emotional feeling or a word devoid of real content, but requires an active moral commitment, a firm and persevering determination to dedicate oneself to the common good, that is, to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all (cf. *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, nn. 38-40).

5. The Church in Mexico, along with her own work of evangelization, co-operates in building an increasingly open and participatory society, in which each individual feels fully accepted and respected in his inalienable dignity. As a mother and teacher, the Church makes human problems her own, clarifying them with the teachings of the Gospel and her social doctrine, proclaiming the priority of the individual over things and of conscience over exclusively utilitarian criteria, which sometimes obscure God's image in man.

The indigenous peoples deserve special attention: their access each day to a better and more decent life, both qualitatively and quantitatively — in areas such as education, health care, infrastructure and other services — must be carried out with respect for their cultures, which are so worthy of esteem. In this regard, it should be pointed out that the Mexican Dioceses in which indigenous communities live are encouraging specific projects aimed at confirming these communities in the Catholic faith that their ancestors embraced and at promoting the recognition of their dignity as persons and as a people, fostering at the same time their full participation in the benefits of the progress achieved by the rest of the Mexican nation.

All these reflections help to lay the foundation for the Mexico which is now on the threshold of the third Christian millennium. For this reason it must go to the very roots of its identity, while remembering that "one cannot remain a prisoner of the past, for individuals and peoples need a sort of 'healing of memories', so that past evils will not come back again" (*Message for the World Day of Peace, 1 January 1997*, n. 3; L'Osservatore Romano English edition, 18/25 December 1996, p. 3). In this way, today's Mexicans, men and women, will be able to live together, without detriment to the due appreciation of their traditions, both Western and indigenous, harmoniously combined in a united nation.

6. Before concluding this ceremony, I would like to express to you, Mr Ambassador, my best wishes that the mission you are beginning today will be rich in lasting fruit. I ask you to convey my sentiments and fervent hopes to the President and

to the other authorities of the republic. At the same time, I invoke the abundant blessings of the Most High on you, on your distinguished family and your colleagues, as well as on all the sons and daughters of the noble Mexican nation, together with the constant and maternal intercession of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the Mother of all Mexicans.

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