



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO H.E. MR LUIS FELIPE BRAVO MENA
AMBASSADOR OF MEXICO TO THE HOLY SEE****

Friday, 23 September 2005

Mr Ambassador,

I am pleased to receive you at this ceremony for the presentation of the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Mexico. I offer you my cordial welcome and thank you for your kind words as well as for the respectful greeting of President Vicente Fox. I reciprocate by asking you to convey to him my best wishes for the peace and well-being of the entire Mexican People.

Since diplomatic relations between Mexico and the Holy See were established in 1992, considerable progress has been made in an atmosphere of mutual respect and collaboration that has benefited both parties.

It is an encouragement to continue working, with the proper autonomy and respective competences, to keep as a primary objective the integral human promotion of the citizens of the Nation, of whom the vast majority are children of the Catholic Church.

In this regard, as you stressed, a democratic secular State is one that protects the religious practice of its citizens without favouritism or denial. On the other hand, the Church considers that in modern democratic societies there can and must be complete religious freedom.

In a secular State it is citizens who, in exercising their freedom, give a specific religious sense to social life. Moreover, a modern State must serve and protect the freedom of its citizens and the religious practice they choose without any kind of restriction or coercion.

This is something that many Documents of the Church's Magisterium have expressed, as have the Mexican Bishops in their recent communiqué: *For authentic religious freedom in Mexico*. "It is not", they declared, "a matter of a right of the Church as an institution but of a human right proper to each person, each people and each nation" (10 August 2005).

In the face of the growing secularism that seeks to reduce the citizens' religious life to the private sphere and to eliminate any social or public expression of religion, the Church is well aware that the Christian message reinforces and illumines the basic principles of all coexistence, such as the sacred gift of life, the dignity of the person together with the equality and inviolability of his or her rights, the value of marriage and the family which cannot be renounced or compared or confused with other forms of human union.

The family institution needs special support because in Mexico, as in other countries, its vitality and fundamental role are gradually diminishing. This is not only because of cultural changes, but also because of the phenomenon of emigration, with the consequent serious difficulties of various kinds, especially for women, children and young people.

The problem of the drug trade that seriously damages society demands special attention. In this respect, the constant on-going effort made by the State and by certain social organizations in the fight against this terrible scourge that affects security and public health deserves recognition.

It should not be forgotten that one of the roots of the problem is the great financial inequality which does not allow for the fair development of a large part of the population, leading many young people to become the first victims of addictions or seducing them with the lure of the easy money they can earn with the drug trade and organized crime.

It is therefore urgent that everyone join forces to uproot this evil by spreading authentic human values and building a real culture of life. The Church today offers everyone her collaboration in this field.

In considering Mexico's history, one cannot but note its many indigenous populations that have striven for centuries to preserve their ancestral and traditional values.

As my beloved Predecessor, Pope John Paul II, said at the canonization of the Indian, Juan Diego, in the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe: "Mexico needs its indigenous peoples and these peoples need Mexico!" ([31 July 2002](#), n. 4; *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, 7 August 2002, p. 8).

In fact, today more than ever it is necessary to encourage their integration, with respect for their customs and the ways in which their communities are organized. This will allow for the development of their own culture and enable them to open themselves, without losing their

identity, to the challenges of the globalized world.

I therefore encourage those in charge of public institutions to promote, on the basis of an effective equality of rights, the active participation of indigenous peoples in the progress and future of the Country. It is a just and indispensable aspiration whose realization will be the foundation of peace, which must be a fruit of justice.

I must also mention the forthcoming elections in 2006. They will be an opportunity and a challenge to consolidate the important advances made in the democratization of the Country. It is hoped that the electoral process will continue to help strengthen the democratic order, resolutely guiding it to develop policies inspired by the common good and the integral promotion of all citizens, with special attention to the weak and the underprivileged.

The Bishops of Mexico referred to it in their Message prior to the start of the electoral process. Its title: *Strengthening democracy by rebuilding the citizens' trust*, clearly indicates the needs of the present time.

Political activity in Mexico must naturally continue to be exercised as an effective service to the Nation. Its goal must be to promote and guarantee the necessary conditions for its citizens to live their lives in the best possible conditions. In the context of the Constitutional State, it is essential to foster respect for the truth, the desire to further the common good, the defence of freedom, justice and friendly coexistence. The process through which people exercise the co-responsibility of democracy is a slow one.

Consequently, the efforts of the Government and also those of the many civil and religious institutions, universities and associations that aim to promote a culture of participation in Mexican society are invaluable.

The texture of the social fabric is also strengthened when lofty objectives are presented to the peoples and the means to achieve them placed within their reach. Thus, in the context of democracy, it is urgently necessary to encourage the creation of ethical and political formation centres where the rights and duties incumbent on all who wish to dedicate themselves to the service of all citizens may be learned and assimilated.

Mr Ambassador, at the end of this pleasant meeting, I renew my most cordial welcome to you and to your distinguished family, and I express my best wishes to you for the success of the mission that is now beginning and contributes to the good relations that exist between Mexico and the Holy See. I fervently implore Our Lady of Guadalupe to protect the beloved Mexican People, so that they may continue to advance on the paths of solidarity and peace.

**L'Osservatore Romano* n. 39 p. 2.

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