



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO H.E. MR. FERNANDO ZEGERS SANTA CRUZ,
AMBASSADOR OF CHILE TO THE HOLY SEE***

Thursday, 7 October 2010

Mr Ambassador,

I am pleased to receive you, Your Excellency, at this solemn ceremony in which you present to me the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Chile to the Holy See. I wish to express to you my most cordial welcome. At the same time I thank you for the words of greeting from H.E. Dr Sebastián Piñera Echenique, President of the Republic, and from his Government.

Your presence at the Holy See, Your Excellency, vividly reminds me of a country which although it is geographically far from here, is very close to my heart, especially since the recent devastating earthquake.

From the very first moment I wanted to express my closeness to the Chilean people and, through Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone's visit, my Secretary of State, I conveyed my comfort and hope to the victims, to their families and to the many injured, whom I keep very present in my prayers. Nor do I forget the miners of the Atacama region and their loved ones, for whom I pray fervently.

In this regard I would like to emphasize the importance of the unity of the Chilean people in the face of disaster, of their most generous and supportive response when suffering worsens and, likewise, for the immense effort that the Catholic Church in Chile many of whose communities have also been sorely tried by the earthquake is making to help those who are most in need.

Your Excellency, you are beginning your mission to the Holy See in the very year in which Chile is celebrating the Bicentenary of its Independence.

This affords me the opportunity to point out once again the role of the Church in your country's most important events, as well as in the consolidation of a national identity of its own, deeply marked by Catholic sentiment.

The fruits that the Gospel has yielded in this blessed land are very numerous; abundant fruits of holiness, charity, human advancement, of the constant search for peace and peaceful coexistence. In this regard I wish to recall the celebration last year of the 25th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship with the sister Nation of Argentina which, with Papal mediation, put an end to the southern disagreement. This historic Accord will remain for the generations to come as a shining example of the immense good that peace brings, as well as the importance of safeguarding and fostering those moral and religious values that constitute the deepest fabric of a people's soul.

One cannot claim to explain the triumph of this longing for peace, harmony and understanding, if one fails to realize how deeply inscribed in Chilean hearts is the seed of the Gospel.

In this regard, it is important especially in the present circumstances in which so many challenges that threaten cultural identity must be faced to encourage especially among young people, a healthy pride, a renewed appreciation and re-evaluation of their faith, their history, their culture, their traditions and artistic wealth, and of all that constitute Chile's greatest and richest spiritual and human patrimony.

In this context I would like to emphasize that although the Church and the State are autonomous and independent of each other in their own fields, nevertheless, both are called to collaborate in a loyal and respectful way to serve the personal and social vocation of people themselves (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 76).

In the fulfilment of her specific mission to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ, the Church seeks to respond to the expectations and questions of men and women, relying on the fundamental values and anthropological principles and ethics that are rooted in the nature of the human being.

When the Church raises her voice in the face of today's great challenges and problems, such as war, hunger, the extreme poverty of so many human beings, the safeguard of human life from its conception to its natural end, and the promotion of the family founded on marriage between a man and a woman and primarily responsible for the education of the children, she is not acting in her own interest or on behalf of principles that can only be perceived by those who profess a specific religious creed.

She does so respecting the rules of democratic coexistence, she does so for the good of the whole of society and on behalf of values that every upright person can share (*Address to the President of Italy*, 20 November 2006).

In this regard the Chilean people know well that the Church in this nation collaborates sincerely and effectively and wishes to continue doing so in all that contributes to the promotion of the common good, just progress and the peaceful and harmonious coexistence of all who live in this beautiful country.

Mr Ambassador, before concluding this Meeting, I express my best wishes to you for the fulfilment of your lofty mission, while I assure you of the cordial welcome and availability of my collaborators. With these sentiments, I cordially invoke upon you, Your Excellency, upon your family and upon the other members of this diplomatic mission, as well as upon the whole beloved Chilean People and its leaders, through the intercession of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, an abundance of divine Blessings.

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