



The Holy See

Apostolic Journey to Bolivia, Lima and Paraguay

(7 - 19 May 1988)

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS***

Tuesday, 10 May 1988

Your Excellencies Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I want to express my heartfelt satisfaction for this opportunity to meet in the city of La Paz the representatives of so many countries and international organizations accredited to the Bolivian government.

The noble diplomatic functions that you exercise make you deserving of our respect and highest consideration. To a large extent you are the trustees of the great hopes for the dream of building a world in which peace, solidarity, mutual cooperation and understanding are the ultimate bases for attaining more human and just relationships within the international community. To this noble task, which deserves our admiration and gratitude, you have dedicated your talents and efforts, which are continually tested in the exercise of the not always easy diplomatic profession. In fact, the very nature of your vocation transforms you into builders of understanding and harmony among nations in order that peace may reign.

However, the human aspiration for peace among peoples is not a simple gift within arm's reach, but it is the fruit of a determined will and continuing effort on the part of everyone. In a world like ours, in which stability and peace among nations are frequently threatened by opposing interests, the work of the diplomat acquires a most singular character in international relations on both the bilateral and multilateral levels. While the final decisions are in the hands of governments, the diplomat's work - giving true and precise information, suggesting ways of resolving things, building bridges of dialogue, negotiation and understanding - is a means that cannot be substituted with

any other in the international order. As I pointed out in my latest Encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, "in a world divided and beset by every type of conflict, the conviction is growing of a radical interdependence and consequently of the need for a solidarity which will take up interdependence and transfer it to the moral plane. Today perhaps more than in the past, people are realizing that they are linked together by a common destiny, which is to be constructed together, if catastrophe for all is to be avoided" (n. 26).

2. The supreme value of peace, of which you must be the convinced promoters, tireless defenders and restorers as the case may be, should be placed, I think, among your priorities as professionals of diplomacy. In this regard, I want to call to mind the principles of reciprocity, solidarity and effective collaboration in international relationship; these were the object of my reflections in a speech to the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See (12 January 1985).

They are valid principles for the whole international community and particularly, for the community of nations that comprise the "Continent of Hope". The common roots of history, culture, language and faith should be strengthened so that the spiritual and moral values which more authentically characterize the origin and vocation of young nations, called to play a vital role in the world, may become ever stronger and firmer in Latin America.

3. Peace, a cause to which all of us must contribute, is not achieved through intransigence or national selfishness. On the contrary, it is attained as well as supported by mutual understanding. On the other hand, such an understanding becomes easier and more fruitful when it comes from a sincere spirit of solidarity; from that solidarity that makes all of us in this world brothers and sisters to one another, aware that the Creator has destined all of us to share in his goods in an equitable manner.

Only thus, on the foundations of justice and solidarity, and with the effort to understand one another, will it be possible to establish the stable bases of balance in order to build an international community without continuous and serious anxieties, tragic insecurity, or conflicts with irreparable consequences. Only thus will it be possible to solve the latent problems in the various parts of Latin America, with the border disputes or the question of Bolivia's land locked situation.

4. You are the agents in the construction of a responsible and solidary international community that can live in assiduous harmony and fruitful security: a family of nations in which all individuals and all peoples can obtain total fulfilment, both in the enrichment of spiritual values, as well as in the development of improved living conditions. Indeed, peace, which is essentially a work of justice, finds its way and its strength in the promotion of development. However, this development is not limited to quantitative economic growth, but hastens, first of all, total social development, under the forms of a better distribution of wealth and improvement of living conditions - both spiritual and material - of each individual and of all people.

The extreme poverty that still burdens many countries is an insult to the whole of humanity. The abysmal gaps between rich and poor countries are incorruptible with the divine plan for everyone's just and equitable sharing in the goods of creation. Furthermore, underdevelopment, as you well know, is one of the causes of the serious social and political instability of many countries afflicted by it. It is a fact that these factors of instability affect not only the less developed countries, but they are also the cause of other larger conflicts which can threaten international peace.

5. Among these factors of instability that afflict today's world, particularly the developing countries, is the heavy burden of the foreign debt. The imbalance between the amount of the debt and the ability to repay it, the difference between the sum given to the borrowers and the profits demanded by the creditors, cause very serious harm to many poor countries. The enormous burden of that debt puts these countries in danger of frustrating their legitimate aspirations to the development which is their due.

The Holy See cannot but encourage all those initiatives directed towards solving, according to the criteria of justice and equity, this serious problem, whose consequences affect above all the poorest and the most needy.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen: I can assure you that you will always find in the Holy See an attentive interlocutor in everything related to world peace and the problems that concern the international community. In ending this meeting, I heartily want to thank you for your presence, while at the same time expressing my most sincere wishes for the integral prosperity of your countries, for the attainment of the objectives of the institutions which you represent, for the success of your mission in Bolivia and for the happiness of your loved ones.

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