



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER
TO THE NEW AMBASSADOR
OF MEXICO TO THE HOLY SEE***

Friday, 18 May 2001

Mr Ambassador,

1. I am pleased to welcome you on this solemn occasion and to receive the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Mexico to the Holy See. I am most grateful for your kind words and for the deferential greeting you have brought from Mr Vicente Fox Quesada, President of the United Mexican States. I reciprocate with my best wishes for his prosperity and for the integral progress of all the citizens of this beloved nation.

2. Mexico has always been distinguished for its pure and rich spiritual, cultural and human values, as I have had the opportunity to experience during my four Apostolic Visits. Today, as you have clearly pointed out, it is experiencing a process of political growth, through a profound change in many aspects of social life, aspiring to overcome the structural causes of poverty and marginalization through an integral model of development that is based on social justice. Therefore it should encourage a culture that will strengthen the democratic and participatory institutions, founded on the recognition of human rights and the cultural and transcendent values of the Mexican people. In this respect I would like to recall that "a democracy without values easily turns into open or thinly disguised totalitarianism" (*Centesimus annus*, n. 46). This is the only way that Mexico will be better able to come to grips with the challenges of the new sociopolitical scene, both in its domestic development and in its relations with the international community.

3. I would like to encourage your country's political and social leaders to deal responsibly with the overall economic situation. On several occasions I have alluded to these situations which, on a global scale, present many problems and prevent so many countries from emerging from

underdevelopment and achieving desirable levels of well-being. In the perspective of integral development, until now the globalized economy has above all benefited a few specific individuals and groups. On the other hand, new forms of poverty, marginalization and even the exclusion of large social groups have developed, especially among the farm workers and indigenous peoples. It is therefore essential to ensure that political and cultural institutions are truly at the service of the human being, without distinctions of race or class. The Church thus feels "called not only to promote greater integration between nations, thus helping to create an authentic globalized culture of solidarity, but also to cooperate with every legitimate means in reducing the negative effects of globalization" (*Ecclesia in America*, n. 55).

It is important that Mexican society become aware of this and, with a truly supportive attitude, be prepared to make the necessary sacrifices that must under no circumstances aggravate the conditions of poverty of the humblest classes. Consequently it is indispensable to improve, progressively, the living conditions of the neediest, in the attempt to guarantee the just means for everyone, also at the fiscal level.

4. Church-State relations in Mexico are marked by a gradual increase in mutual respect and cordiality: respect, so as not to interfere in what is proper to each institution, but which leads to mutual support and collaboration in order to achieve greater well-being for the national community. Thus it is possible, through constructive dialogue, to promote fundamental values for the organization and development of society. Therefore, now is the time for the whole historical truth of Mexico, from its origins, to shine far more brightly, overcoming prejudices and discredits, dualisms and revisionism.

To this effect, the Church, whose mission is spiritual and not political, encourages cordial relations with the State, thereby contributing to the harmony and progress of all, without distinction. It is therefore to be hoped that the Church in Mexico may enjoy greater freedom in the various areas where she carries out her pastoral and social mission.

In this regard, the political community and the public institutions of the State should be connected in a way that respects the principle of subsidiarity and guarantees the religious freedom of individuals and groups. This requires that forms of intolerance be avoided and that the contribution of religion to the common good be properly appreciated, in the same way that the institutions of the State and of the political parties neither directly nor indirectly take the place of the Church. For this reason the Second Vatican Council determines this area in the following words: "*At all times and in all places the Church should have true freedom to preach the faith, to proclaim her teaching about society, to carry out her task among men without hindrance, and to pass moral judgements even in matters relating to politics, whenever the fundamental rights of man or the salvation of souls requires it. The means, the only means, it may use are those which are in accord with the Gospel and the welfare of all men according to the diversity of times and circumstances*" (*Gaudium et spes*, n. 76).

5. One concern felt by the Church in Mexico and by Mexicans is that legal and juridical development establish an increasingly just order for the indigenous peoples. There have sometimes been contrasting attitudes which, considering the convergence of cultures as a misfortune, have opted for one to the detriment of the other. Some, aiming to protect the indigenous culture, have insisted on ideologies based on a blurred interpretation of history. Others, on the contrary, have extolled the imported values as though they were the only ones to be valid and genuine.

Looking at this panorama it is impossible not to undertake a purification of memory and to assess the mestiza identity, starting with the two cultures that combine and have great future potential, if they can be reconciled. In this way, it will be possible to forge a sound identity that will adopt the two roots of its present characteristics with joy and hope.

Appreciation of the dignity of the indigenous must therefore continue to mature without any kind of interruption. In Mexico's plural and multi-ethnic situation this is the root that influences the piety and the national identity. If Mexicans succeed in becoming better acquainted with one another, their awareness of being brothers and sisters in the great Mexican family will be strengthened. On this subject, I know that the Bishops, with their attitude of diligent collaboration, are inviting Mexicans not to erect barriers of division and hostility which separate them, but to "build together a just, reconciliatory, supportive and fraternal peace". Indeed, during my last visit to Mexico I said, "May no one be excluded from this dialogue and may it bring all your inhabitants even closer together, believers loyal to their faith in Christ and those who are far from him. Only fraternal dialogue with everyone will give new life to the plans for future reform desired by citizens of good will, who belong to every religious creed and to the various political and cultural sectors" (*Farewell address*, International Airport, n. 2, 26 January 1999).

6. At the time when you are beginning the important office to which you have been appointed, I would like to offer you my best wishes for the success of your mission to this Apostolic See. As I ask you kindly to convey these sentiments to your President and his Government, to the authorities and to the beloved Mexican people, I assure you of my prayers to the Almighty that with his gifts he will always help you and your distinguished family, your collaborators and the leaders and citizens of your noble country, whom I always remember with special affection.

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