



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. MR VALENTÍN ABECIA BALDIVIESO,
NEW AMBASSADOR OF BOLIVIA
ACCREDITED TO THE HOLY SEE***

Monday, 8 September 2003 Mr Ambassador, I receive you with great pleasure at this Audience for the presentation of the Letters of Credence accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Bolivia to the Holy See. I am deeply grateful to you for your kind words at this solemn act inaugurating the mission that your Government has entrusted to you. Please convey my greeting to the President of the Republic, H.E. Mr Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, as well as to all the men and women who live in the vast territory of your sunny homeland, formed by a wealth of geographical features: majestic mountains, lowlands, valleys, lakes and plateaux. In those latitudes the features of the Bolivians were shaped by the encounter between the ancient indigenous cultures and those that arrived down the ages, and today offer a varied cultural and ethnic reality, called to live in mutual respect and integrated coexistence. Bolivia has a strong religious imprint which, more than five centuries after the beginning of evangelization, reveals its people's faith. In this regard the Catholic Church, faithful to her task of bringing the message of salvation to all peoples, spares no effort to encourage the integral development of human beings and to defend their dignity, helping to consolidate the fundamental and basic values so that society may enjoy stability and concord. The different ecclesial communities, also motivated by the wish to keep alive the content of the Gospel message, continue to contribute their valuable collaboration in such important areas as teaching, assistance to the most deprived, health care, as well as the promotion of the individual as a citizen and child of God. The Pastors of Bolivia, therefore, in communion with the Successor of Peter and as a reference point for everyone, must continue to offer their wise and prudent words that stem from a deep knowledge of the human situation in Bolivia, interpreted in the light of the Good News. Consequently, in the difficult times that the country has lived through because of its sensitive and inflammable social situation, the Bolivian Episcopate has offered to help promote initiatives for peace that foster understanding and reconciliation. This way of working, as I pointed out to the Bishops during their last *ad limina* visit, "is only a temporary part of the greater task of carrying out a much more extensive work, that involves evangelization and promotes justice and fraternal solidarity among all citizens" ([*Address to the Bolivian Bishops on their ad limina Visit*](#), 13 April 2002, n. 8; *ORE*, 1 May 2002, p. 3). May the religious mission that is proper to the Church not prevent her from fostering a national dialogue between the civil leaders, so that all may cooperate effectively to overcome the crises that surface. Moreover, as you made clear, Your Excellency, this dialogue must be free of any form of violence and its various expressions, and must help build a more human future with the collaboration of all, avoiding the impoverishment of society. In this regard, it is timely to recall that mere application of the necessary technical means is not enough to achieve social improvements; reforms with a human and moral basis need

to be promoted that take into account an ethical view of the person, the family and society. The constant proposal of the fundamental moral values, such as honesty, austerity, responsibility for the common good, solidarity, the spirit of sacrifice and the culture of work can thus assure to all the members of the national community a better development, since violence, individual and collective selfishness and corruption at any level have never been sources of progress or well-being. Bolivia's predicament must not be a cause of division, nor should it foment hatred or resentment among those who are called to build the country. It is well known that the future of a nation must be based on social peace which is the fruit of justice (cf. Jas 3: 18), building the kind of society which, starting with the political, parliamentary, administrative and judicial authorities, encourages concord, harmony and respect for individuals, as well as defending their fundamental rights. Bolivians, with the rich qualities that distinguish them, must be the main protagonists and artisans of the country's progress, cooperating in a political stability that enables them all to take part in public life. Bolivian citizens are distinguished for their courage in dominating a nature that is harsh and rigorous; unwavering in the face of difficulties, they are motivated by a deep humanism and a sense of solidarity. I would therefore like to encourage them, so that they do not lose heart, to achieve better goals of progress. Each one, according to his gifts and possibilities, is called to make his own contribution to the good of the homeland. In this regard, I am pleased to know that the Authorities are determined to establish a more just and participatory social order. I therefore express my earnest hope that the Government's action may overcome the serious and long drawn-out financial crisis which affects above all the weakest social classes. The moral teachings of the Church offer values and guidelines for building a more just and fraternal society; if they are taken into consideration by those who work at the service of the nation, they can be useful for a satisfactory response to the needs and aspirations of Bolivians. The painful and widespread problem of poverty, with serious consequences in the area of education, health care and daily life, is a pressing challenge for political leaders and government authorities as they face the nation's future. A real awareness is essential if they are to come to grips with the present situation at all levels, thereby truly cooperating in their commitment to the common good. As in other parts, the poor lack the basic essentials and cannot find the indispensable means that allow for their promotion and integral development. I am thinking of the *campesinos*, the miners, those who live on the outskirts of cities who are victims of a materialism that excludes human beings and is solely motivated by the concern for enrichment or power. In this situation, the Church, with the contribution of her social teaching, tries to further and encourage suitable initiatives that aim to overcome the situations of marginalization that affect so many needy brothers and sisters, in order to eliminate the causes of poverty, thereby fulfilling her mission, since concern for social progress is a part of evangelizing action (cf. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, n. 41). Mr Ambassador, before concluding this meeting, I would like to express to you my best wishes for the success of your mission that begins today. I ask you once again to express my sentiments and hopes to the President of the Republic and to the other Authorities of your country, as I invoke God's blessing and the protection of Our Lady of Copacabana upon you, upon your distinguished family and collaborators, and upon all the most beloved sons and daughters of the noble Bolivian nation, whom I always hold in deep

esteem.

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