



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. MR JOSÉ LUIS RODRÍGUEZ ZAPATERO
PRIME MINISTER OF SPAIN**

Monday, 21 June 2004

Mr President,

It gives me great pleasure, a few months after you have assumed your important office, to receive you together with your distinguished entourage. By this visit you show your esteem for the Apostolic See. Your presence here reflects the desire to develop harmonious collaboration between the local Church and the State for the good of the Spanish People, a desire you yourself expressed to me when I met you in the Plaza de Colón, Madrid, after Holy Mass on 4 May last year.

Through you, I would like to express anew my affection and closeness to all the Spanish people, to Their Majesties the King and Queen, and to the Royal Family, together with those who, as part of the Government, gave me such a warm welcome on each of my five Visits to your Country. I reciprocate this demonstration of affection by renewing my sincere appreciation to the Catholic community in Spain. With its Bishops, it is walking the paths of faith in close communion with the Pope. I likewise pray that this beloved Nation may always aim at integral progress; I pray that peaceful coexistence in it may be strengthened in unity among the population and peoples of this great Land with its marvellous and various diversity, and that it will preserve its moral and cultural values as well as its Christian roots.

A few days ago when I received your new Ambassador, I had the opportunity to mention various aspects of Spanish society. Reasserting what I said on that occasion, I would like to renew to you my sincere gratitude for this kind visit. I warmly hope that your personal commitment and that of your Government will reach the pre-established goals by undertaking the modern development of Spain, and that in this task due attention will be paid to the ethical values so firmly rooted in the

religious and cultural tradition of your People.

Be assured that you can rely on the collaboration of the Holy See to work together in the great cause of peace and for the spiritual progress of peoples, to contribute to the eradication of terrorism and all forms of violence so as to achieve the best results for human beings with their legitimate requirements, their dignity, rights and freedoms. I fervently ask the Almighty to pour out an abundance of his gifts and Blessings upon you, Mr President, upon your collaborators involved in Government, and upon the beloved children of your noble Country.

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