



The Holy See

*Discours au Président de la République d'ARGENTINE,
S.E.M. Carlos Saul MELEM**

16 décembre 1993

Mr. President,

I am very pleased to receive this morning the Chief Executive of the Argentine nation, accompanied by the Ministers of State and the senior officials of his Government. In expressing my deep gratitude to them for this visit, I would like to address a respectful greeting to them and offer them a most cordial welcome.

Your presence reminds me in a special way of my unforgettable Pastoral Visits to your country during which I was able to appreciate the very genuine, human and Christian values of the noble soul of Argentina, from whose people I received such a demonstration of support and affection. I would like to repeat my thanks for all this, and the affection that I feel for all the children of this beloved nation.

During the years that have passed since my second visit in 1987, which I wished to be at the same time a pilgrimage of thanksgiving to God for the satisfactory outcome of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between the two sister countries of Argentina and Chile, whose relations had been seriously strained because of the disagreement in the south, many changes have occurred in the country's life. We are following with particular interest, Mr. President, the efforts being made to find ways to solve the problems that are troubling your country, in order to establish a more equitable social order that allows for fuller participation. To do this, as Your Excellency has expressed on various occasions, it is necessary that the much hoped-for reformed society be built on the moral and transcendent values that represent the strongest factor for social cohesion. Further, it is necessary that the Christian conception of life and the moral teaching of the Church continue to be the essential values that inspire all people and groups who work for the good of the nation.

As I pointed out in my recent Encyclical *Veritatis splendor*, there «is a risk of an alliance between democracy and ethical relativism, which would remove any sure moral reference point from political and social life, and on a deeper level make the acknowledgement of truth impossible» (n. 101). Hence it is essential to safeguard and reinforce a correct conception of man and his destiny, since human freedom and its exercise in the personal family and social life, as well as the legislation that serves as a framework for coexistence in the political community, find their reference point and their just measure in the truth about God and about man. Indeed, the course of history itself shows that theoretical and practical systems which are closed to transcendence ultimately aggravate the divisions between individuals and groups, and fail to achieve the desired progress.

On the other hand, truth, as a category of thought, should be expressed in an attitude of sincerity by those persons who make up the social body. In fact, truth is a virtue that, together with the spirit of service, competence and efficiency, produces in a nation the fruit of justice and a spirit of solidarity. This is why, in the Encyclical quoted above, I made a reference to «truthfulness in the relations between those governing and those governed openness in public administration, impartiality in the service of the body politic» (*Veritatis splendor*, n. 101), as the basis and guarantee of integral progress at all levels.

Mr. President, the Church tirelessly sets forth these moral principles in her social doctrine, which also serves to form consciences, indicating at the same time the best way to strengthen the spiritual and civil foundations of society, so that all human activity may reflect the dignity and nobility of man and be exercised in obedience to the order desired by God. Prompted by my pastoral concern, I proposed in the Encyclical *Centesimus annus* the model of «a society of free work, of enterprise and of participation», one differing from the socialist system and its centralized economic planning, but nevertheless capable of overcoming the undeniable deficiencies of capitalism (cf. n.35).

From the stand point of the social teaching, especially prominent is the human and Christian virtue of solidarity the «firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good that is to say, to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all» (*Sollicitudo rei socialis*, n. 38). The practice of solidarity within the social dimension enables individuals and intermediate-level groups to become interdependents – an inevitable reality in the contemporary world – and thus direct their common effort to being a sign and effective expression of love for their homeland.

In contrast to what has just been said, in not a few countries, including those with a strong Christian tradition, one notes the entrenchment of a view of life based only on material prosperity and a selfish freedom that considers itself unlimited. On this subject, the Church's teaching recalls the need for the mobilization of resources and potential always to be guided by a moral understanding (*ibid.*, n. 28). As a result, it seeks a development of the whole man and of all men.

This is the reason why it is necessary to ensure that the initiatives directed to stimulating economic development should always respect the principles of fairness and the just distribution of effort and sacrifices on the part of the various social groups. On the other hand, it is up to the public authorities to see that the most underprivileged sectors be appropriately protected and have access to the goods that are their due. I hope that the positive results that are occurring in this regard may be further developed and strengthened through the common endeavour of all members of society.

In the context of the new situations and challenges that we are facing today, it is necessary then, to promote an awareness of solidarity that unites purposes and efforts in order to eliminate poverty and hunger, ignorance and unemployment. As has been repeatedly proclaimed by the Magisterium of the Church, it is a question of continuing to achieve living conditions that enable individuals and families as well as intermediate groups and associations, to attain their fulfilment and to follow their legitimate aspirations of well-being and progress. To do this, one must restore basic values to social coexistence, such as respect for truth and justice, a determined commitment to peace and freedom, the reinforcement of the bonds of solidarity: all in a framework of individual and collective honesty, which in Argentina is opening new ways to hope and to economic and social development so that it may occupy its rightful place in the concert of nations.

Mr. President, many deep bonds have united Argentina with the Apostolic See since its very origins as a nation. On this occasion, I would like to express to you the Church's firm determination to continue promoting and inspiring all those initiatives that serve the cause of man, his dignity and integral progress, always fostering the spiritual and religious dimension of the individual in his personal family and social life. The religious nature of her mission enables her to carry out this service over and above earthly motives and personal interests, as the Second Vatican Council teaches: «The Church, by reason of her role and competence, is not identified with any political community nor bound by ties to any political system. She is at once the sign and the safeguard of the transcendental dimension of the human person» (*Gaudium et spes*, n. 76). I am certain that in this phase of democratic life, the Church's activity in Argentina will continue to be present with a renewed vocation to serve at all levels, especially on behalf of the neediest, thereby contributing to the improvement and progress of society as a whole.

Mr. President, before concluding this meeting I would like to repeat my sincere gratitude to you for this friendly visit. Through you I pay tribute to the whole Argentine nation. And as I fervently pray to the Almighty through the intercession of Our Lady of Luján for an abundance of gifts to all the beloved children of your noble country, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing.

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