



Le Saint-Siège

*Discours à l'Ambassadeur du VENEZUELA,
S.E.M. Lucas G. CASTILLO LARA**

22 novembre 1993

Mr. Ambassador,

I am particularly pleased to receive the Letters of Credence that accredit you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Venezuela to the Holy See. I am sincerely grateful for the kind words you have addressed to me, and in particular, for the deferential greeting of Mr. Ramon J. Velasquez, President of the Republic, to whom I ask you to convey my best wishes for peace and well-being, together with my wishes for the prosperity and overall progress of the beloved Venezuelan nation.

Your presence, Mr. Ambassador, reminds me of the intense days of faith and hope I experienced in your country during my Pastoral Visit, which enabled me to appreciate the most genuine values of the Venezuelan soul: human warmth, hospitality, determination in the face of adversity, aspirations to greater justice and brotherhood that are engendered in a people formed under the protection of Christ's cross, in the heart of the Church.

I am glad to learn that the authorities of your country are resolutely working to strengthen a more equitable social order open to wider participation. In view of the events that occurred last year with the resulting changes in the public order and the violence which created an atmosphere of discontent and general uneasiness, the Bishops of Venezuela, fulfilling their pastoral mission made an urgent appeal for reconciliation and solidarity: «Moved by the Pope's words and the reality of a country where peace and coexistence have been particularly damaged», wrote the Bishops, «let us reaffirm our evangelizing and humanizing commitment, with a view to reconciliation» (Exhortation Reconciliation and Solidarity, January 1993, 1). To accomplish the noble task of reconstruction, everyone must collaborate with generosity and great breadth vision,

putting the common good before individual interests and always promoting true, constructive dialogue which avoids rejection and confrontation.

I sincerely hope that the Venezuelan people, the great majority of whom are children of the Catholic Church, will do everything in their power to build a society of greater justice and solidarity. In this respect, the Christian principles that have forged the life of the nation should play a more intense and active role in social affairs, instilling in everyone hope and encouragement to overcome the difficulties of the present time. For their part, in the document quoted above, the Bishops of Venezuela emphasize that «despite the moral crisis in which the country is submerged, it is evident that increasing awareness is decisive for the present and the future of the nation, for the ethical renewal of society and for the effective recognition of basic principles and values, such as respect for life, truth and justice, hard work and sharing in a spirit of solidarity» (ibid., n. 3).

In the initiatives being undertaken to increase economic and social development, it is essential that the principles of equality in the just distribution of efforts and sacrifices by all should be respected. The common goal must be to meet the basic material needs of Venezuelans today and to provide for those of tomorrow; to fight against poverty, unemployment and ignorance; to convert potential natural resources with intelligence, hard work, responsibility, constancy and honest management; to distribute wealth more evenly, reducing the deep inequalities that offend the condition of being brothers and sisters who are children of the same Father and sharers in the gifts that the Creator places in the hands of all mankind. In a special way, it belongs to the public authorities to ensure that the most underprivileged sectors do not have to bear the brunt of the economic readjustments. For this reason I take the liberty to recall that the Church's teaching must continue to be an essential factor inspiring all those who work for the good of individuals, families and society, so that—as I pointed out in my recent Encyclical on moral doctrine *Veritatis splendor*: «The splendour of truth [may] shine forth in all the works of the Creator and, in a special way, in man, created in the image and likeness of God» (*Veritatis splendor*, n. 1). In this regard, some eloquent words of the Liberator Simon Bolivar come to mind: «Without the awareness of religion, moral principles lack foundation».

In this context, it is becoming necessary to promote the basic values for social coexistence, such as respect for the truth resolute commitment to justice and solidarity, honesty, the capacity for dialogue and participation at all levels. As the Magisterium of the Church has constantly repeated, it is a question of continuing to achieve the conditions of life that enable individuals and families as well as intermediary groups and associations to reach fulfilment and the realization of their legitimate aspirations to overall progress.

There are many deep bonds that from its very origin as a nation have linked Venezuela to this Apostolic See. On this occasion, I would like to express Mr. Ambassador, the Church's firm intention to continue to cooperate with the authorities and the various institutions of your country to help the Venezuelan people, especially the poorest and neediest. Your country is motivated to do

so by its vocation of service to all and its steadfast desire to contribute to the integral advancement of all its citizens, as well as to the protection and promotion of the supreme values that must be the soul of the nation.

Mr. Ambassador, in again expressing to you my best wishes for the success of your high mission that begins today, I assure you of my prayers to the Almighty that, through the intercession of Our Lady of Coromoto, he will always bless you with his gifts, as well as your distinguished family, your co-workers, the leaders of your noble country, and the beloved Venezuelan people, whom I shall always remember with special affection.

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