



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. MR JORGE DEZCALLAR DE MAZARREDO
AMBASSADOR OF SPAIN TO THE HOLY SEE***

Friday, 18 June 2004

On Friday, 18 June, H.E. Mr Jorge Dezcallar de Mazarredo, Ambassador of Spain, presented his Letters of Credence to the Holy Father. The following is a translation of the Spanish text of the Pope's Address to the new ambassador.

Mr Ambassador, I am pleased to receive you at the presentation of the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of Spain to the Holy See. This ceremony also affords me an opportunity to express my cordial welcome to you, and at the same time my best wishes for the discharge of the important responsibility that your Government has entrusted to you. I am grateful for your kind words. They revive my sentiments of closeness for and appreciation of a Country which, as Your Excellency has stressed, has always been distinguished by its bond with the Church due to its deep-rooted Christian tradition. A large-scale evangelization has resulted in the large number of faithful in the world who speak Spanish. I deeply appreciate the greetings from His Majesty the King, the Royal Family and the Spanish Nation and its Government, and I ask you to convey to them the Pope's fond affection for all Spaniards. As I note with satisfaction that the state of diplomatic relations between Spain and the Holy See is based on esteem and respect, I cannot forget my five Visits to this Country. I remember above all my most recent one of last year, when the warmth of the testimonies were combined with overflowing vivacity and enthusiasm. Once again I found myself among a vibrant multitude from a cross-section of society with a deep faith and fond affection for the Successor of Peter. It was a very clear sign of hope for the Church and for Spanish society, since noble values lived intensely are, as it were, the soul that gives coherence to all human activities and imbues it with creativity and integrity in times of decline or adversity such as Spain has recently experienced, especially due to the scourge of terrorism. Conscious of this, I took my leave addressing a heartfelt invitation to the Spanish People: *"Do not neglect this mission which ennobled your Country in the past and is the bold challenge for the future"* (*Regina Caeli*, Madrid, 4 May 2003; *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, 7 May 2003, p. 7). This mission endures beyond the boundaries of the Homeland, where many thousands of men and women religious, volunteer workers and lay cooperators, with their dedication and self-denying efforts, are as many messengers portraying the best image of their Country. Spain has produced a multitude of saints and is covered with monuments, centres for assistance, cultural centres and works of art inspired by the faith. They are visible signs of its identity and the vital force that has guided its glorious past and which it

has generously been able to bring to many other peoples. At a time when a new Order is also being born in old Europe, its contribution cannot fail to plainly manifest its Christian roots which, as in the other European countries, have for centuries engendered the lofty concept of the person open to transcendence, which is also a crucial factor of integration and universality. In exercising her mission, the Church seeks the integral good of each people. She works in her own province and fully respects the autonomy of the civil Authorities, whom she appreciates and for whom she prays to God that they may serve all citizens with generosity, skill and justice. In fact, it is a question of two autonomous milieus. They cannot be ignored since both benefit from loyal and constructive dialogue, because the common good frequently requires different forms of collaboration between them, without the least sign of discrimination or exclusion. This was a feature of the partial Agreements between Church and State that were established immediately after the approval of the current Spanish Constitution. The results achieved and the development attained with their practical application are also a consequence of constant, open communication, established on firm and durable foundations. This was precisely to avoid the risk of the sudden alterations or transient alternations that all too often give rise to insecurity and confusion about the proper rights of institutions, families and citizens. In her evangelizing action, the Church attempts to invite all men and women of good will to build a society based on fundamental and indispensable values for a just and worthy national and international order of the human being. This should be combined with her religious mission and has an ethical character with a universal outreach, founded on the incomparable dignity of the human person created in the image of God, from whom his inalienable rights derive. Public institutions must serve and promote precisely these rights, in accordance with the classical principle of subsidiarity. Thus, human coexistence, rather than only obeying partial or transient interests, must govern by means of the ideals of freedom, justice and solidarity. In this perspective, it is advisable to reveal the incoherence of certain tendencies in our time. Whereas on the one hand they increase people's well-being, on the other hand they cut off their dignity and most fundamental rights at the roots; this is what happens when the fundamental right to life is limited or exploited, as in the case of abortion. The protection of human life is a duty of all. Moreover, the question of life and its promotion is not only a prerogative of Christians, but belongs to every human conscience that aspires to the truth and is concerned about humanity's future. Public authorities, as guarantors of the rights of all, are under the obligation to defend life, especially the lives of the weakest and most helpless. The real "social conquests" are those that promote and safeguard the life of each one and, at the same time, the common good of society. In this field some "social conquests" are misnamed, for in reality they only benefit some at the cost of the sacrifice of others, and public leaders, as the guarantors and not the source of the rights that are innate in all, must view them rather with concern and alarm. Something similar sometimes happens with the family, the central and fundamental nucleus of every society, the unequalled hearth of solidarity and the natural school of peaceful coexistence, which deserves the greatest possible protection and help in carrying out its tasks. Its rights are a priority in comparison with those of larger social bodies. Among these, the right to be born and to grow up in a stable home in which the words "father" and "mother" can be said joyfully and without deception should not be forgotten. Thus, the smallest children are also prepared to open themselves confidently to life and to society, which will benefit as a whole if it does not listen to certain voices that seem to confuse marriage with other, quite different forms of union, if they are not actually opposed to it, or to consider children as mere objects for a person's own satisfaction. Among other things, families have the right and duty to raise their children, doing so in accordance with their own moral and religious convictions; integral formation cannot escape the transcendent and spiritual dimension of human beings. The role of educational institutions bound to the Church fits into this context. They contribute to the common good like many others in various milieus which also render a service to citizens, and often to the least privileged. Nor should the teaching of the Catholic religion in State schools be undervalued, based precisely on the right of the families that ask for it, without discrimination or imposed conditions. Mr Ambassador, I repeat to you my

very best wishes for the Embassy of your Country to the Holy See, and in this Holy Year of St James, I ask the Apostle of Santiago to continue to be as he has for centuries a shining beacon for the peoples of Spain, making its territory a path paved with efforts and hopes for so many pilgrims from across Europe. Many of the pilgrims have been enchanted by the hospitality and nobility of those they encountered on their way; they witnessed their hard work, constancy and fidelity; they discovered a Nation that knows how to aim high. These are the virtues that shaped its glorious history and, with the support and loyal collaboration of all, give rise to hope in a promising future, a more prosperous and impartial society that is open to the spiritual values. With these aspirations, as I wish you a happy stay in Rome, I impart to you the Apostolic Blessing, which I extend to your distinguished family and to those who work with

you.

**L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English n. 27 p. 2. © Copyright 2004 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana*

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana