



***ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. Mr Raúl Roa Kourí,
Ambassador of Cuba TO THE HOLY SEE****

Saturday, 8 January 2005

Mr Ambassador,

I am pleased to welcome you at the presentation of the Letters of Credence accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Cuba to the Holy See. I am grateful for your kind words and for the greetings from Dr Fidel Castro Ruz, President of the Council of State and the Government of the Republic. I express my best wishes to him for his good health and for the integral prosperity of the beloved Cuban Nation. For this Nation I ask God, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, venerated in your Country under the lovely title: "*Nuestra Señora de la Caridad del Cobre*", to deepen the sentiments of mutual understanding and genuine brotherhood that will enable the Homeland to be the true home built by all.

At the same time, I can tell you of the interest with which I follow the commitment of the Cuban Authorities to maintaining and developing the goals they have succeeded in achieving with effort in the areas of health care, education at various levels and culture in its different expressions. The Holy See considers that by assuring these conditions of human life one sets in place some of the pillars in building up peace, which means not merely the absence of war but also the possibility for all a society's members to enjoy integral human advancement, good health and the harmonious development of mind and body.

Likewise, the Holy See keenly hopes that the obstacles standing in the way of free communication and exchanges between the Cuban Nation and a part of the international community can be removed as soon as possible, and thus the conditions required for its authentic development strengthened through respectful and open dialogue with one and all.

For its part, Cuba is distinguished for its spirit of solidarity, demonstrated by the personnel and material resources that it sends to relieve the basic needs of various peoples affected by natural disasters, war or poverty. The Church's social teaching has come a long way in recent years, particularly in shedding light on situations that require this dimension of solidarity, based on justice and truth. In this regard, the Church in Cuba, with her evangelizing presence and spirit of sincere and effective service to the Cuban People, strives to draw attention to her social magisterium, not only with words but also through practical advice and concrete achievements. The whole range of values and proposals, an integral part of the Church's teaching and her consequent social action, are part of her evangelizing mission, hence, also

of her identity.

If the Church's action among the Cuban People is to be more effective in promoting the common good, it would be appropriate that she be able, in an atmosphere of genuine religious freedom (cf. *Dignitatis Humanae*, n. 13), to maintain and increase the bonds of solidarity that already exist with her other Sister Churches. The latter do not hesitate to support the Cuban People generously in very different ways. In particular, they make available priests and men and women religious who further the work of the Catholic Church in Cuba, whose members belong to the Cuban People and who live united and in communion and harmony with the Apostolic See.

Indeed, in any pluralist society the Church offers guidelines and proposals that can lead to different viewpoints among those who share the faith and those who do not. Divergence here must not lead to any form of social conflict; rather, it must encourage a broad and constructive dialogue.

In this regard there are areas in which the Church in Cuba desires to shed light on the social situation, such as, for example, the widespread problems caused by the promotion of human dignity; consideration of the real situation of families and the education of the new generations in a culture of peace, life and hope; the complex relations between the economy and spiritual values; overall attention to the human person. These are the contexts in which to further dialogue with all the groups that comprise the Cuban People.

Mr Ambassador, at the time when you are beginning your duties in this diplomatic mission, I would like to confirm to you the willingness of the Holy See and of the Church in Cuba to persevere in their service to the men and women who live in your Country, and to take the path of constructive dialogue to overcome any differences. I renew my greetings to the Cuban Authorities and invoke God's help and an abundance of his Blessings upon you, your family and your collaborators, as well as upon the entire Cuban Nation which I always remember with affection.

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