



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO ECUADOR, BOLIVIA AND PARAGUAY
(5-13 JULY 2015)

MEETING WITH GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES AND THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER

Gardens of López Palace, Asunción (Paraguay)
Friday, 10 July 2015

[Multimedia]

Mr President,
Distinguished Government Authorities,
Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I offer cordial greetings to you, Mr President, and I thank you for your respectful and affectionate words of welcome in the name of the government, the civil authorities and the beloved Paraguayan people. I also greet the distinguished members of the diplomatic corps, and through them, I express my respect and esteem to the countries they represent.

A particular word of thanks is due to all those individuals and institutions which worked so hard to prepare this visit and to make me feel at home. It is not hard to feel at home in so welcoming a land. Paraguay is known as the heart of America, not only because of its geographic location, but also because of the warmth of its hospitality and the friendliness of her people.

From the first days of the country's independence to recent times, Paraguay has known the terrible sufferings brought on by war, fratricidal conflict, lack of freedom and contempt for human rights. How much suffering and death! Yet the Paraguayan people have also shown an admirable spirit of perseverance in surmounting adversities and in working to build a prosperous and peaceful nation. Here, in the garden of this palace which has witnessed so much of the country's

history – from the time when it was no more than a riverbank used by the Guaraní, until the present day – I wish to pay tribute to the many ordinary Paraguayan people, whose names are not written in history books but who have been, and continue to be, the real protagonists in the life of your nation. I would also like to acknowledge with profound admiration the role played by the women of Paraguay in those very dramatic historical moments, especially during that horrible war which almost managed to destroy fraternity among our peoples. As mothers, wives and widows, they shouldered the heaviest burdens; they found a way to move their families and their country forward, instilling in new generations the hope of a better tomorrow. May God bless Paraguayan women, the most glorious of all in the Americas!

A people which forgets its own past, its history and its roots, has no future, it is a dull people. Memory, if it is firmly based on justice and rejects hatred and all desire for revenge, makes the past a source of inspiration for the building of a future of serene coexistence. It also makes us realize the tragedy and pointlessness of war. Let there be an end to wars between brothers! Let us always build peace! A peace which grows stronger day by day, a peace which makes itself felt in everyday life, a peace to which each person contributes by seeking to avoid signs of arrogance, hurtful words, contemptuousness, and instead by working to foster understanding, dialogue and cooperation.

For some years now, Paraguay has sought to build a solid and stable democracy. It is proper to recognize with satisfaction progress made in this direction, thanks to the efforts of everyone, even amid great difficulties and uncertainties. I encourage you to continue working to strengthen the democratic structures and institutions, so that they can respond to the legitimate aspirations of the nation's people. The form of government adopted by your Constitution, a "representative, participative and pluralistic democracy" based on the promotion of and respect for human rights, must banish the temptation to be satisfied with a purely formal democracy, one which, as *Aparecida* put it, is content with being "founded on fair election procedures" (*Aparecida Document*, 74). That is a purely formal democracy.

In every sector of society, but above all in public service, there is a need to reaffirm that dialogue is the best means of promoting the common good, on the basis of a culture of encounter, respect and acknowledgment of the legitimate differences and opinions of others. In the effort to overcome a spirit of constant conflict, unity is always better than conflict; convictions born of ideology or partisan interest should blend advantageously with love of the country and its people. That love must be the incentive to increased administrative transparency and unceasing efforts to combat corruption. I know that today there exists a firm desire to root out corruption.

Dear friends, in the desire to serve and promote the common good, the poor and needy have to be given priority of place. Paraguay has done much to advance along the path of economic growth. Important steps have been taken in the areas of education and health care. May all social groups work to ensure that there will never again be children without access to schooling, families without

homes, workers without dignified employment, small farmers without land to cultivate, or campesinos forced to leave their lands for an uncertain future. May there be an end to violence, corruption and drug trafficking. An economic development which fails to take into account the weakest and underprivileged is not an authentic development. Economic progress must be measured by the integral dignity of persons, especially the most vulnerable and helpless.

Mr President, dear friends, in the name of my brothers, the bishops of Paraguay, I also wish to assure you of the commitment and cooperation of the Catholic Church in the common effort to build a just and inclusive society where each person can live in peace and harmony. All of us, including the Church's pastors, are called to be concerned with building a better world (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 183). Our sure faith in God, who willed to become man, to live among us and to share our lot, urges us to press forward. Christ opens up to us the path of mercy, which, founded on justice, goes beyond it to inspire works of charity, so that no one will remain on the fringes of this great family which is Paraguay, a land you love and wish to serve.

With great joy I have come to this country consecrated to the Blessed Virgin of Caacupé – and here I would like to remember in a special way my Paraguayan brothers and sisters in Buenos Aires, my former Diocese; they belong to the parish of the Virgin of the Miracles of Caacupé – I invoke the Lord's blessings on each of you, your families and all the beloved people of Paraguay. May this country be fruitful, as symbolized by the pasiflora flower on Our Lady's mantle, and may the national colors which decorate her image draw all the Paraguayan people to embrace the Mother of Caacupé.

Thank you very much.