Speech at the Universidad Católica Cardenal Silva Henríquez. Santiago, September 27, 2002

Mr. Chancellor, university officials, faculty, and students. Ladies and gentlemen.

It is a great honor for me to receive the Cardinal Raúl Silva Henríquez Distinction, bestowed upon me by the University Council of this institution of higher education, which is named after him.

For someone like myself, who felt a calling to teaching from a young age and devoted a significant portion of my career to it for many years, both at the university level and in secondary education, no tribute could be more honorable than one that comes from the field of education. This honor is especially meaningful because it comes from a young university that bears the name of that distinguished Chilean and pastor, Cardinal Silva Henríquez, and that is inspired by the transcendent and enduring values of Christian humanism.

As I express my deep gratitude to the Chancellor and the members of the University Council, who honor me with this distinction, I cannot help but associate it to the warm friendship shown to me by Don Raúl during times when he and I—along with many of our compatriots—shared concerns, sorrows, and hopes regarding the fate of our homeland.

Faithfull to his episcopal motto, "*la caridad de Cristo nos urge*" (The Charity of Christ urges us on), Cardinal Silva felt as his own the problems, needs, sufferings, desires, and hopes of the people—especially the humblest—over whom he was called to be a pastor.

At the same time, he felt a very strong commitment to the homeland, which he conceived as “a profoundly human communion in values that demand the setting aside of innate selfishness and deserve the sacrifice of one’s life, “as well as “solidarity in a mission and a destiny that concern everyone and distinguish them from other peoples of the earth.”

In his remarkable essay *El alma de Chile* (The Soul of Chile), after asserting that “the homeland cannot be invented or transplanted, because it is fundamentally a soul; the collective soul of a nation, a consensus and communion of spirits that cannot be forcibly changed or distorted, nor can it be created by the will of a few,” he points out certain traits that, in his view, “decisively shape our spiritual identity” as a nation. Here they are:

1° “The primacy of freedom over all forms of oppression.” In his words, “an essential component of the soul of Chile is the appreciation and tradition of freedom—both individual and national—as the supreme good, even greater than life itself… In Chile, there is no place or validity for any historical project or social model that would infringe upon personal freedom or national sovereignty.” In his view, this entails " a serious responsibility: every Chilean must educate themselves and others for freedom. Training for the free exercise of one’s own abilities—to think, discern, express opinions, and act; to participate in the formulation and implementation of social decisions—is a fundamental task for Chileans.”

2° “The primacy of the legal order over all forms of anarchy and arbitrariness,” which is expressed in the Portalian tradition that the reign of freedom “is possible only within order, through the common observance of objective norms that are sacred because they guarantee freedom; of the common respect for an authority that imposes itself, not so much through the force of

coercion as through the radiance of its inner nobility and the imposing testimony of its altruism... Our soul is nourished by a tradition in which the ruler defines himself as a servant, never a dominator." Don Raúl remarks at the beginning of 1986, while still under an authoritarian regime, that "this is not a privilege to take pride in, but a legacy to reclaim, a responsibility to assume." And he immediately adds, categorically, that "every Chilean must educate themselves and others to respect the law; the law is the just balance between freedom and order." He concludes by stating that "the corollary of this respect for the law is the possibility of disagreeing—a feature that has distinguished Chilean coexistence throughout its history." I would say, to be more precise, "throughout almost its entire history."

3° "The primacy of faith over all forms of idolatry. The soul of Chile has been nourished from its very beginnings—the Cardinal asserts emphatically—by the invigorating sap of faith, not just any faith, but specifically the biblical faith that forms the great Judeo-Christian tradition," a faith whose "primary function is to denounce the falsity of all idols," whether they be Gold, Power, Glory, or, in more recent times, 'political ideologies,' 'economic systems,' or 'new moral codes.' "Power, efficiency, consumption, wealth, and even economic development itself are not values worthy of human beings when they are achieved by sacrificing human beings," asserts Don Raúl.

Invoking that primacy of faith—Don Raúl recalled on that occasion—"with the same urgency and anguish with which, faithful to the unchanging doctrine of the Supreme Pontiffs, we condemn Marxist-inspired socialism, we have also demonstrated the incompatibility of the Christian faith with the ideology of unbridled capitalism, which regards profit as the essential engine of economic progress; competition as the supreme law of the economy; and private ownership of the means of production as an absolute right, without limits or corresponding social obligations. Likewise, that ideology—as Pope Paul VI has said—leads to dictatorship and generates—in

the words of Pope Pius XI—the international imperialism of money. The Christian faith urges us to condemn it and to solemnly recall, once again, that the economy is at the service of humanity" ...

I felt it appropriate to recall these ideas of Cardinal Silva Henríquez on this occasion, as the university that bears his name honors me with this distinction, which—in the words of its chancellor—"seeks to highlight those individuals who have helped to reflect and spread the ideals that this Pastor longed for our homeland and that this University is committed to making its own."

Because Cardinal Silva's vision of "the soul of Chile" perfectly encapsulates the spirit with which, beginning in the 1930s of the century that has just ended, many of us Chileans—who were young at the time—inspired by others who were older but equally youthful in spirit, took on what we considered an inescapable civic responsibility regarding the destiny of our homeland.

This is neither the time nor the place to take stock of the contribution that the National Falange Party, first, and then the Christian Democratic Party have made to the political, economic, and social development of Chile, always inspired by our love for Chile, by our unrestricted respect for freedom and its institutional traditions, and by our quest to build a more just, more prosperous, and more fraternal society.

Those of us who have held leadership responsibility in that process—beginning with the founders who are no longer with us—await the judgment of history with confidence.

However, I believe that the distinction so generously bestowed upon me by Cardinal Silva Henríquez University provides me with a good opportunity to share some reflections on the current reality of our country, what we have

done and are doing as part of the Democratic Coalition governments, and the challenges Chile faces in the near future.
It is clear that we are going through a difficult period. Over the past two or three years, the growth rate of our economy, which fluctuated around 7% annually during the last decade, has been halved. The most painful effect of this economic stagnation has been the rise in unemployment, which has climbed from rates of no more than 5% to figures approaching 10%.

Faced with this painful reality suffered by many of our fellow citizens who have lost their jobs or cannot find the work they seek—a reality that alarms many other workers who fear losing their jobs, and which the media often exaggerates—an understandable climate of concern has arisen in the national community.

The fact that this is a global phenomenon, originating in other parts of this globalized world, does not deter some from trying to take advantage of the situation by blaming the government or the coalition that supports it. The fact that official reports from relevant international organizations show that our economic decline is much less severe than that of traditionally prosperous nations, and predict favorable prospects for recovery, does not lift the spirits of the pessimists.

As a result, a sense of discouragement and pessimism is beginning to spread throughout the country, leading people to forget or downplay the remarkable progress the country has achieved in recent times and continues to experience even now.

Shouldn't the great progress our country has made in recent years in its exports, especially in sectors such as salmon and seafood, wood, fruits, wines, and even some industrial goods, be a source of general satisfaction?

Shouldn't we take joy in the remarkable advances we have made in recent years in road infrastructure, ports, and airports, which facilitate the movement and transport of passengers and goods?

Shouldn't we appreciate the fact that, over the past twelve years, an average of one hundred thousand homes have been built annually, which has solved the housing problem for more than one million families who previously had to share homes or live in shantytowns?

And what about the progress made over the past twelve years in the areas of education and health?

In the area of education—which is of the utmost importance for young people and for the future of our nation—people seem to overlook the fact that, in the last decade, between 1990 and 2000, the Chilean educational system increased its enrollment by 364,416 students in basic education, 103,127 in secondary education, and 190,422 in higher education. It is undoubtedly a source of satisfaction for Chileans that, at the start of the 21st century, 2,355,594 students in our country are completing basic education, representing 97% of school-age children; that 822,946 students, representing 84% of the adolescent population, are completing secondary education; and that enrollment in universities and higher education institutions has reached 435,830 students, representing 27% of the population between the ages of 18 and 30.

Growth of this magnitude, which entails significant increases in teaching staff, substantial improvements in their salaries and professional development opportunities, as well as the expansion and improvement of school infrastructure, JUNAEB (Junta Nacional de Auxilio Escolar y Becas) food

programs, and the distribution of textbooks and study materials to students, are facts of obvious significance that seem to be ignored by the public, to whom the media report only on the low results of certain tests that measure students' performance.

In the area of health care, no one can ignore the significant progress made in recent years toward improving hospital infrastructure—which had been so deteriorated during the previous period—as well as investments in local health centers and medical offices, and improvements in the services provided there.

And what can be said about the reforms that have improved the administration of justice in recent years, particularly through the Reforma Procesal Penal[14] already implemented in five regions of the country; the reforms carried out to democratize and strengthen regional and municipal administration; the legislation that established the national environmental protection system; and so many others that in recent years have modernized and democratized the Chilean state's administrative system to meet public needs more efficiently?

Lastly, allow me to address an issue that, in my view, is particularly important because of its human significance and its moral implications: the human rights violations committed during a tragic period of our history that is best not to be recalled.

Shortly after the democratic transition began, a little over a month after taking office as President of the Republic, I established the National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation so that, within a period not exceeding nine months, it would compile as complete a picture as possible of the most serious human rights violations that took place during the dictatorship, identify the victims,

determine their location, and recommend the measures of reparation and vindication that it deemed fair, as well as the legal and administrative measures that should be adopted to prevent the recurrence of similar events.

As the country knows, that Commission—composed of distinguished Chileans of various religious, ideological, and partisan convictions, and chaired by that exemplary citizen Raúl Rettig—published a report that I presented to the nation at the time.

In accordance with the recommendations of that Report, the Corporation for Reparation and Reconciliation was established by law on February 8, 1992, with the mission of completing the investigations of the Rettig Commission, granting reparations to the families of the victims, and providing them with social and legal assistance.

In total, the Commission and the Corporation identified 2,095 people who were killed and 1,102 people who disappeared, all victims of human rights violations.

As soon as I received the Report of the Commission, I brought it to the attention of the Supreme Court and requested that it instruct the relevant courts to initiate the appropriate proceedings, pointing out that the amnesty law in force could not be an obstacle to conducting the corresponding judicial investigation and determining responsibilities.
As the country is aware, the courts have initiated numerous proceedings in connection with these criminal acts, and many individuals, including officers of the Armed Forces, have been convicted or are currently on trial for these crimes.

Furthermore, the Dialogue Table established by my successor, President Frei Ruiz-Tagle—which concluded its work during the term of President Lagos—

signified the acceptance by all its members of the conclusions of the reports by the Rettig Commission and the Corporation for Reparation and Reconciliation, as well as the commitment of everyone to cooperate in locating the bodies of the people who disappeared.

I believe that this entire process constitutes an event of great ethical significance which, despite its drama, brings honor to Chile, and which history will remember as an expression of maturity and civic integrity. Unfortunately, among us it has generated more reactions of criticism and rejection than of recognition of its ethical value.

Another reflection I would like to share with you refers to what I dare to call the "deification of the market," a phenomenon that is increasingly prevalent in the processes of national life. As a former professor of public administrative law for many years, I find it difficult to understand why the concept of public service is becoming increasingly obsolete and is being replaced by that of private enterprise, and why, consequently, the public law procedures that once governed activities aimed at meeting collective needs are being replaced by commercial procedures characteristic of private law.

This growing privatization of public goods implicitly entails their commercialization. The concession of public works is, without a doubt, a good way to finance them; I welcome it. But I find it hard to understand why the infrastructure built in this way begins to take on the characteristics of a private good—not only in terms of the fee or toll that must logically be paid for its use, but also in that the concessionaire operates or assumes the powers of an owner or proprietor of that infrastructure.

We are witnessing the phenomenon whereby the public square—a national public good par excellence and a natural, free space for people to stroll,

gather, and enjoy themselves—is gradually being replaced by the mall: a private building and its surrounding space, of an eminently commercial nature, open to public use under conditions set by its owners and under the supervision of their security services.

Market efficiency as a tool to facilitate and promote the trade of goods and services, to regulate their prices based on supply and demand, and to guide the allocation of resources in response to needs, tends to become a decisive criterion not only for private transactions but also for defining public policies. The serious problem is that the major market players are often entities of unknown identity that frequently conceal questionable interests and, in the globalized world of our time, do not even have a definite nationality.

Who guarantees the "common good"—shared by society as a whole and by its individual members—when the decisions that affect them are left to the free play of the market?

I do not intend to deny the levels of progress and well-being achieved by the societies we call "developed" and by the privileged sectors of the so-called "developing" world, nor the successes they have achieved under market economies. What I categorically reject is the notion that such successes justify idealizing the market economy model—as neoliberalism, so in vogue today, does—considering it a sort of panacea for human progress.

The challenge is not to replace the market economy with a centrally planned one, nor with any other alternative model. I believe that no one today is considering that. But what is urgently needed is to find a way to avert the danger of us humans becoming slaves to the market and instead ensure that markets function in the service of humanity.

How do we guide markets to serve the common good, rather than becoming mere instruments of their logic? How do we ensure that the State—the institution dedicated to the common good—fulfills its natural role in the economic field?

I believe the answer is provided by economist Michel Camdessus, former managing director of the International Monetary Fund, whom no one could accuse of being a socialist or a heterodox thinker, when he said that "to the invisible hand of the market, we must add the strong hand of the state's justice and the hand of solidarity."

"The strong hand of state justice." In my view, this is the way forward. The state is the institution dedicated to the common good. Through private law, it regulates relations among private individuals in matters concerning their private interests; through public law, it regulates relations between private individuals and society in matters affecting the social or collective interest. We all acknowledge that our natural freedoms are limited by the freedoms of our fellow citizens and by the common good. We all acknowledge our freedom of movement as natural, and we do not consider it infringed upon by municipal ordinances regulating traffic on public roads, nor do we consider our right to property infringed upon by those regulating the height or safety conditions of buildings.

The same logic of prioritizing the common good justifies state intervention to regulate, govern, or establish conditions for certain economic acts or operations when they may affect the common good.

Camdessus also mentions "solidarity." This is an eminently Christian concept, a natural expression of the brotherhood among human beings as children of the Father God. It is a concept that aligns with what Pope John Paul II told us

at ECLAC during his visit to Chile, when he invited us Latin Americans to practice an “economy of solidarity.”

Recently, in his address to participants at the Jubilee of Government Leaders, Members of Parliament, and Politicians in late 2000, the Holy Father said: “There needs to be a greater spirit of solidarity in the world, as a means of overcoming the selfishness of individuals and nations. Only in this way will it be possible to curb the pursuit of political power and economic wealth with no reference to other values. In a now globalized world, in which the market, which of itself has a positive influence on human freedom and creativity in the economic sector, nonetheless tends to be severed from all moral considerations and to take as its sole norm the law of maximum profit, those Christians who feel themselves called by God to political life have the duty—quite difficult yet very necessary—to conform the laws of the "unbridled" market [and subordinating them] to the laws of justice and solidarity. Only in this way can we ensure a peaceful future for our world and remove the root causes of conflicts and wars: peace is the fruit of justice.”

Solidarity emerges as a natural community response to the challenges of competition. It entails a moral and social attitude of acceptance of interdependence among people and among nations, which leads us to work together in the pursuit of the common good.

The common good is, in turn, the good of all and of each individual, and it implies recognition of the dignity of all people as members of the human family and of the many communities to which we naturally belong. This leads, as an obvious consequence, to the need to overcome individualism through community organization, in which human beings come together to help one another, defend their rights, and seek the common good.

In my view, this is the role of what is called "civil society," which we must understand as the collection of communities and associations to which human beings naturally belong or voluntarily join in order to satisfy common needs, interests, aspirations, or ideals.
It is through social organization that people, especially the modest ones, can most effectively compensate for their weaknesses, help one another, or work together to solve their collective problems. It is through organization that consumers can defend their common interests. It is also through this way that different social groups can ensure that their members' rights are respected and work toward better fulfillment of their needs and aspirations in health, education, housing, urban improvement, or in cultural, sports, or any other areas.

When considering the role of solidarity in economic life, one thinks of the ability of social actors to organize themselves to collectively defend their common interests. It is the way in which the weakest sectors or those with the least economic power can ensure that their needs and aspirations are taken into account. There is a great deal of work still to be done in this field in our country, which NGOs are striving to address to some extent, as they gain an increasing presence in contemporary societies. Through organization, human beings compensate for their weakness as individuals by joining forces with others to achieve social goals.

Mr. Chancellor, dear students, ladies and gentlemen: As I reiterate my gratitude for the honor you have bestowed upon me, I trust that the reflections I have just shared will help shape your judgment regarding the great challenges we Chileans face in ensuring that the Christian values, which Cardinal Silva defended and promoted with such conviction and integrity, play a decisive role in our national life.

Thank you very much.