



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO KOREA, PAPUA NEW GUINEA,

SOLOMON ISLANDS AND THAILAND

(MAY 2-11, 1984) MASS AT TAEJU WITH PRIESTLY ORDINATIONS **HOMILY OF POPE JOHN PAUL II** *Taeju (Korea)*

Saturday, 5 May 1984 Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, dear young men who are receiving the priesthood in this impressive assembly of faith and fervent prayer,¹ Here, this morning, in Taeju, in the presence of your Bishops, before so many guests, surrounded by so many priests, religious and laity of the People of God in this land - and by so many enthusiastic young people who love you dearly and give you the support of their prayers - you are receiving *the gift of the priesthood*. It is a gift to you and to the Church from Christ himself. On this day dedicated to the theme of *sharing*, it is good for us to realize that it is God himself who first shares his gifts with us. "What have you" - asks Saint Paul in the reading we have just heard - "What have you that you did not receive?" (1 Cor. 4, 7). Indeed, it is through God's gift that from now on you will be considered "servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God" (*Ibid.*). I am sure that you have meditated deeply on these words and that they are engraved on your minds and on your hearts. They spell out for you your identity as priests of Jesus Christ.² In becoming priests, you receive a sacramental *outpouring of the Holy Spirit*. Christ is giving you a share in his priesthood: he joins you to himself in the work of Redemption. It is certainly a privilege for you to be chosen, but a privilege that involves a service - service like that of Jesus who came to serve and not to be served (Cf. *Matth.* 20, 28), like that of Mary, the humble handmaid of the Lord (Cf. *Luc.* 1, 48). Christ has chosen you as servants and stewards. In what way are you to serve him? Here are his own words: "If any one serves me, he must follow me" (Cf. *Jo.* 12, 26). As priests you are called to follow the divine Master in a particular way. You are called to a *discipleship* that reaches down into the deepest level of your person. You will receive a sacramental configuration to Christ that touches every sector of your life. We are talking, in fact, about the priest's particular way of *sharing in the Paschal Mystery* of our Saviour's Passion, death and Resurrection. Let us listen once again to Christ's words: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (*Ibid.* 12, 24). The Church rightly insists that your ordination to the priesthood is a "dying to self", for it is precisely this *giving of oneself* that opens the way to fruitfulness: if the grain of wheat dies, it bears much fruit.³ Are you sometimes afraid of the demands that Christ is making on you? You are certainly aware that your priestly service will often require from you the courage of self-sacrifice. It is then that you must look at Jesus' reaction to these same fears, as described in today's reading from the Gospel: "Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, for this purpose I have come to this hour" (*Jo.* 12 27). Your purpose as priests is to be *one with Christ in the work of Redemption*: "Where I am, there shall my servant be also" (*Ibid.* 12, 26). May the example of your Korean priest Martyrs speak to your hearts, revealing to you the true nature of your vocation, banishing any false expectation. May these men who shared to the full in Christ's Paschal Mystery be your models of generous service and priestly sacrifice.⁴ Where is

Christ's Paschal Mystery being actuated now? Above all, it is actuated in *the great gift of the Eucharist* of which you are being made stewards. Christ *entrusts* this supreme gift to you. In the celebration of the Eucharist, acting in the person of Christ and proclaiming his mystery, you re-enact and apply the one Sacrifice of the New Testament, the Sacrifice in which Christ offered himself to the Father as a spotless victim for the forgiveness of sins (Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 28). Not only does he entrust this gift to your ministry, he also invites you *to share* ever more fully in it. In this way the Eucharist becomes the nourishment of your priestly life. Just as the life of Jesus receives its full meaning and is completed in the Paschal Mystery, so too it is in the Eucharist that the priest finds the full meaning of his life, the source of his strength, and the joy of his dedicated pastoral service to the People of God. At the table of the Word and of the Bread of Life you make Christ present for the building up of the ecclesial community.⁵ It is especially from the Eucharist that you will draw the strength to follow Christ and *to be where he is*: "Where I am, there shall my servant be also". Jesus Christ is where the Gospel shows him to us: in poverty, humility and vulnerability at his birth; sharing the joys and sorrows of his people; close to the daily life of the men and women of his land; blessing the children; in conversation with the young; compassionate towards all. Above all we see him praying to his heavenly Father, seeking silence and solitude in order to reflect upon the Father's will, and accepting that will in obedience unto death (Cf. *Phil.* 2, 8). Christ was to be found wherever the Father willed him to be. And in our day too he is close to the poor, the sick, the outcasts, the downtrodden, the oppressed, the sinners. That is where Christ is. That is where the Church is. That is where you are called to be, as priests. All of these people are still waiting for the Good News of the Redemption, the hope of the Beatitudes. Christ has something to give to every man, woman and child whom he has redeemed. He opens the treasures of definitive truth and the treasures of the Father's love to all those who hear him and accept him. But in order to live "for others", you too must live by this truth and this love. Do not be deceived by any other message, even if it is proclaimed in Christ's name. You are called to be witnesses of the paradox that Christ proposes: "He who loves his life loses it, he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life" (*Jo.* 12, 25). Yes, you are called to be bearers of the hope of eternal life, a hope that illumines and completes all temporal realities: "If any one serves me, the Father will honour him" (*Ibid.* 12, 26).⁶ Dear brothers: "What have you that you did not receive?" (*1 Cor.* 4, 7). The priesthood is *God's great gift to you*. It will take root in your hearts more fully, and produce more abundant fruits, the more you realize *the gratuitousness of the gift*. Like Mary, you too ought to rejoice in God your Saviour, who has looked down upon you in your lowliness (Cf. *Luc.* 1, 47-48). A realization of the gap between the supernatural greatness of the gift and your own unworthiness will keep you from becoming proud: as the first reading reminded us, it will keep us from "boasting" as if it were not a gift (*1 Cor.* 4, 7). Above all, you will be moved to respond to Love with love: to give yourselves for the salvation of the world with total generosity and courage: to meet Gift with gift. This is the real challenge of your priesthood: "It is required of stewards that they be found *trustworthy*" (*Ibid.* 4, 2). That you may be trustworthy: this is my prayer for you; that must be your response to Christ and to the Church; this is the proof of your love for your brothers and sisters in this land who look to you for guidance and inspiring leadership.⁷ The Pope has a special greeting too for the many young people present at this ordination. I am truly happy to see so many of you. You are full of life and hope, gathered together here to take part in the Paschal Mystery of the Lord in the Eucharist, and also to witness the wonderful event in which young men are being ordained to the priesthood. All of you must wonder in your hearts how it is that these young men, so much a part of your generation, come to be priests today. Each one of you too is confronted by *the challenge of giving full meaning to your life*, the one life you are given to live. You are young and you want to live. But you must live fully and with a purpose. You must live for God, you must live for others. And no one can live this life for you. The future is yours, full of perils and possibilities, hope and anguish, suffering and happiness. But the future is above all a call and a *challenge to "keep" your life by giving it up, by "losing" it* - as the Gospel has reminded us - by sharing it through loving service of others. And the

measure of your success will be the measure of your generosity. In a word, you must live in Christ Jesus, for the glory of the Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit. Amen. © Copyright 1984 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

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