



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO KOREA, PAPUA NEW GUINEA,
SOLOMON ISLANDS AND THAILAND **ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO THAI BISHOPS**

Saint Louis Hospital - Bangkok (Thailand)

Friday, 11 May 1984

Dear Brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ,

1. My heart is *filled with gratitude* in this hour of collegial unity. I am grateful to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has given me the opportunity to make this pastoral visit to Thailand and to proclaim the Paschal Mystery in your midst. And I am grateful to you, venerable and dear brothers, for having desired my presence among you and for having welcomed me with such warmth and fraternal love.

Through the power of Christ's death and resurrection we are experiencing in a special way the unity of the Church, and *in this ecclesial unity we are living the life of Christ*. Yes, Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Redeemer of mankind, is with us and in us. As we celebrate our unity in him, the mystery of his risen life unfolds in us. Jesus Christ is alive in his Church, and his Church is alive in him. As pastors of the flock, we are gathered to celebrate this mystery of Christ's living presence in his Church.

Indeed, I have come to Thailand to pay homage to the Christ who lives in your people, *to the Christ who in your people has himself become Thai*.

2. The Christian communities that we are called to serve, dear brother bishops, are the communities that live the life of Christ in all its dimensions. In your people, Christ continues *his life of prayer*. Through the members of his Body the Church, he adores his Father, thanks him, and offers expiation and supplication for the world.

The mystery of *Christ's redemptive suffering is renewed* in the community to which you minister

day after day. Through suffering humanity, Christ brings to completion the measure of suffering that belongs to him (Cf. *Col.* 1, 24).

In the community of the faithful, *the risen Christ works incessantly for the salvation of the world*. In his zeal he offers himself to his Father for the conversion of sinners. He exercises his power to forgive sins, he touches consciences, he heals hearts. He stands in the midst of the community as the Suffering Servant of the Lord and of humanity, inviting everyone to take on his dispositions of humility and meekness.

In the Church, *Christ continues to proclaim the Gospel of God's Kingdom*. He himself catechizes. He himself reveals his Father and the Holy Spirit. Moreover, the very life of the Most Holy Trinity is accomplished in the Church. Through his members, indeed acting in his members, Jesus loves his Father to the point of saying in all truth: I love the Father (*Io.* 14, 3). And the Father, in loving the Church, fulfils Christ's own words: "The Father loves *me*" (*Ibid.* 10, 17).

Dear brothers: the mystery of the Church is the mystery of the life of Christ, the mystery of the living Christ. And this is the mystery which we are living, together with our people. *All our pastoral efforts are aimed at assisting the faithful to share more intimately in the life of Christ*.

3. A *heightened awareness of the profound mystery* of Christ's life in us sustains us in our apostolic activities. This awareness, nurtured in faith, generates in us *pastoral strength*. When we realize that the living Christ is in us, we understand more deeply that "God did not give us a spirit of timidity but a spirit of power and love and self-control" (*2 Tim.* 1, 7).

Being rooted in this conviction, you radiate *new hope* as you announce the Gospel of peace and minister to your flocks, however small they may be. Your ministry takes on an *added sureness* as you realize how relevant Christ's promise is: "I am with you always, to the close of the age" (*Matth.* 28, 20). *Fresh joy* is manifested in the witness that you give; you communicate a *serene confidence* to your local Churches.

With *renewed zeal* you then proclaim the life which was proclaimed to you, "which was from the beginning . . . the eternal life which was with the Father" (*1 Io.* 1, 1-2). The life of Christ, and in Christ the life of the Most Holy Trinity, is *the great treasure that you share* with all those who freely choose to listen to you, and to accept your witness, your teaching, your proclamation of the faith.

4. This great treasure must be presented in an especially dynamic way to *the young people of the Church*. It is they who are assailed most by the problems of the modern world; it is they who need a particular grace from Christ to endure the Christian combat with temptation and sin. In Christ the young people can find the answers to the deep questions that are at the basis of all Christian choices. How greatly they need the pastoral support of their Bishops, together with their priests, in order to develop and persevere in their Christian vocation.

In speaking of the young people and their needs *we cannot ignore the formidable problem of narcotics* in the world today, as well as the causes of this phenomenon and the means needed to face this crisis of humanity. The whole human community must be mobilized to confront this issue. But here the Church has a specific task of educating to human dignity, to the respect of self, to the values of the spirit, to the search for that true joy which abides in the heart and not in the passing exhilaration of the senses.

In this regard the *Catholic schools* in particular are in a position to make an excellent contribution to the solid education needed by the young to overcome the temptation of drugs. The Catholic schools provide a proper context to impart the information that will assist young people to resist the pressures placed upon them, and the opportunity for them to discuss with their teachers the safeguards that experience can offer. Above all, the power of Christ's word, presented through the ministry of the bishops, offers to all the young the deep solution to all the many problems that touch their consciences as they strive to live the life of Christ.

In this area of narcotics and in so many others the pastors of the flock must stand vigilant in the midst of the faithful, proclaiming *the great motivation of the Christian vocation*, which is to live the life of Jesus Christ.

5. As bishops you are called upon to help your people face many issues that affect their lives as individuals and as members of a family and of society. If your people are constantly reminded of *their Christian dignity* - of their life in Christ - they will have an ever *fresh motivation* to face the challenges made to them by the Gospel of Christ, which has much to say about public and private morality, about the need to worship God and to serve one's neighbour. As bishops, never hesitate to emphasize to your communities how their Christian vocation gives them an important mission of Christian witness. Christ himself put it this way: "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (*Matth. 5, 16*).

Dear brother bishops: *I am close to you* as you strive to help your young people and the Christian families from which they come, as well as the whole Christian community, to live to the full the life of Christ. As you endeavour to promote vocations to the priesthood and religious life and as each of you strives to be a brother, father and friend to the priests who collaborate with you in building up the Church in faith and love, know that you in turn are supported and loved by the Pope, by the whole college of bishops and by the entire Church. This is indeed the mystery of the Church: to live Christ's life and to live it together.

Everything we do as bishops must be marked by *the attitude of the Good Shepherd*, who through us wants to continue to love his flock, because he came "that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (*Jo. 10, 10*).

Venerable and dear brothers: this is the meaning of our lives and of our sacred ministry: *to live in*

Christ Jesus and to serve that life in others.

Praised be Jesus Christ! Praised be Jesus Christ in Thailand!

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