



The Holy See

PILGRIMAGE TO INDIA

HOMILY OF PAUL VI

Bombay - Friday, 4 December 1964

Venerable Brothers, dear Sons and Daughters in Christ,

As we look out upon the vast multitude gathered here in worship and as the prayers and hymns of the Divine Liturgy which has been celebrated still sound in Our ears, the words of Our Lord come easily to Our mind: «I tell you that many will come from the east and from the west, and will feast with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven» (*Matth. 8, 11*).

Though we have not yet arrived at that happy consummation when the Lord's words will be completely fulfilled, we rejoice in the fact that their promise is visibly manifested in this gathering today. Many have come from the east and from the west and are gathered around the table of the Lord. Many traditions and cultures are represented here, but the Eucharist which has been celebrated is one, and the unity which it signifies and builds up is the unity of all mankind with God in Jesus Christ.

The Liturgy which We have celebrated today comes from an ancient tradition in the Church. First of all, it reminds Us forcibly of the fact that Christianity has been present in this great land from apostolic times through the venerable traditions brought from Palestine, the homeland of the Lord.

If the name Syrian denotes their origins, the ceremonies and the language indicate clearly that they have become deeply rooted in the soil of India. Through centuries which were often difficult they have maintained their vitality and strength, so that today they are a living witness to the ever youthful vigour of the Gospel of Christ.

Succeeding centuries brought new contributions to the Christian life of this country. The great saint Francis Xavier was followed by many other fervent apostles from various cultures who brought the

message of Christ's peace and our reconciliation with God. If these newer traditions have preserved many distinguishing characteristics of their own, they are also striving to draw deeply from the culture and life of this country.

The plurality of these traditions is a living witness to the Catholicity of the Church of Christ, which is at the same time for all men, embracing all cultures, and also can express in a particular way the truth and beauty which exist in each culture. In a special manner this Eucharistic Congress manifests this fact and testifies to the truth of what We so recently proclaimed, together with the Fathers congregated in the Second Vatican Council: «The Church fosters and takes to itself, in so far as they are good, the ability, riches and customs in which the genius of each people expresses itself. Taking them to itself, it purifies, strengthens, elevates and consecrates them».

In recognizing this truth, we acknowledge the obligations it places upon us. The first of these is the necessity for a deep, fraternal cooperation among those who share differing liturgical traditions.

You are all one in steadfastly holding to the teaching of the Apostles and the Fathers and in the breaking of the Bread. You are one in your communion with each other and with the Successor of Peter, whom the Lord has established as the Chief Pastor of His Church. Perhaps in the past, the idea of legitimate plurality joined with mutual cooperation may have been obscured at times. But today there must be a new dedication to this idea. The Constitution on the Church clearly states: «In virtue of this catholicity, each individual part contributes through its special gifts to the good of the other parts and of the whole Church. Through the common sharing of gifts and through the common effort to attain fulness in unity, the whole and each of the parts receive increase». Oh, that these words may be engraved on your hearts and be realized in your individual and corporate life!

What treasures of grace will be brought to yourselves, your country and the whole world, if these words become the animating force behind the witness you give to the mission with which Christ has charged you!

There is another obligation which stems from this realization of the catholicity of the Church. That is the obligation to remain faithful to your traditions, at the same time as you strive to adapt yourself to the needs of the present age, and to become more fully a part of the life and culture of your native land. Fidelity to your traditions will help maintain so many ties with what is good and genuine in the past, and also preserve or reestablish bonds with those who share these traditions, but who are not in full communion with the Catholic Church. In a spirit of fidelity and charity, through mutual cooperation devoid of any spirit of contention, you can contribute greatly to the building up of Unity among Christians who live and work together, side by side.

But this fidelity is not to be a dead veneration of the past. It must be joined to a living adaptation to the needs of your people, as they continue to make a positive contribution to the spiritual and

cultural life of their country. In this happy union of fidelity and adaptation, entered into by all the different hierarchies and their faithful together in a spirit of fraternal cooperation, lies the promise of a genuine witness to Christ and to His Gospel in this beloved land of India, so rich in religious life and spiritual striving.

It is in this spirit, that with joyful heart We invoke upon the celebrants of this Holy Liturgy, their clergy and faithful, and upon all the bishops, priests and people of every rite and tradition gathered here, the Apostolic Blessing.

Priest: Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace and salutary hope to men, always and for ever. Amen.

People: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name; your kingdom come; your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day the bread we need and forgive us our offences and sins as we also have forgiven those who offended us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For yours is the kingdom, power and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Deacon: Bless, O Lord.

Priest: O Christ our God and our Saviour, hope of the sick and the afflicted, through the prayers of your Mother Mary ever virgin, of St. John the Baptist, of the Apostles and of our Father St. Thomas, of the Prophets, Martyrs and of all the Saints, have mercy on the sick and the afflicted, bless them and give them your grace that they may with patience and holy resignation bear all their pains and sorrows for the benefit of their body and soul. You, the resuscitator of our body and the benevolent Saviour of our soul, Lord of all for ever.

People: Amen.