



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC PILGRIMAGE
OF HIS HOLINESS OF PAUL VI
TO WEST ASIA, OCEANIA AND AUSTRALIA

HOLY MASS IN HAPPY VALLEY

HOMILY OF THE HOLY FATHER PAUL VI

*Hong Kong, Happy Valley
Friday, 4 December 1970*

Dear Brothers and Sons and Daughters,

It is with joy that We have accepted the gracious invitation extended to Us by your zealous shepherd, Our brother, Bishop Hsu. We are pleased to take the occasion of the apostolic journey that has brought Us to Asia and Australia for meetings with the Episcopal Conferences to make a visit, howsoever brief, to the largest Chinese diocese in the world. We are very happy to be with you, dear sons and daughters of Hong Kong. We want to thank you personally for the affection and devotion that you have manifested to the Holy See in many different ways. We want to congratulate you on the many accomplishments of your so vital Catholic community. We want to encourage you to persevere firmly in the faith of your baptism and confirmation and to exhort you to an ever greater commitment in searching the most apt means of rendering the Christian message of love more understandable in the world in which you live. Thus you will contribute effectively in showing to all your brothers and sisters the perennial youth and reforming power of the Gospel of Christ and so give them a hope for the building up in love of a more fraternal society.

We are now in prayer.

May each one of us be conscious of the twofold relationship that this prayer, our Holy Mass, produces in our souls. We are in relationship with Christ, and we are in relationship with men, our

brothers.

Yes, gathered here together in the name of Christ, we are with him. Rather, he is with us. He himself has assured us of it. Where you meet in my name, he said, I shall be there with you (Cfr. *Matth.* 18: 20). Moreover, to Our humble person is entrusted the ministry of representing him, Jesus Christ, the one Head, though now invisible, of the Church (Cfr. S. TH., III, 8, 1), the supreme «Shepherd and Guardian» of our souls (Cfr. *1 Petr.* 2: 25). It is a joy to us that Our office as his Vicar makes his presence in this sacred assembly more deeply felt, makes his divine power more effective and his spiritual consolation more immediate. The rite that we are celebrating will shortly become even more realistic and mystical: then it will be the sacrificial meal which Christ himself instituted that it might recall and sacramentally renew his redeeming Passion; and he will give himself to us as the food of eternal life.

Brethren, let us all join in giving to this celebration the fullness of its meaning. Let us endeavour to adhere to it, each and every one of us, with the most firm assent of our minds. Let us give it the humble, resolute, and total profession of our faith, that we may have an everlasting memory to sum up this extraordinary and happy moment. In a short time we shall be saying: «Let us proclaim the mystery of faith». That is the first relationship that this liturgical action of ours should make active now and for ever: faith. We proclaim this faith to you all and We confirm you in it.

There is a second relationship, as you know, which is produced by our celebration: it is produced first in our consciousness, then in our hearts, and finally in our exterior life.

The Eucharist is a sign and a bond of unity (Cfr. S. TH., III, 73, 2 and 3). It is a sacrament of communion. In the very act whereby the Eucharist puts us in real communion with Christ it puts us in spiritual, mystical, moral and social communion with all those who eat the same bread (Cfr. *1 Cor.* 10: 17). It is the sacrament of ecclesial unity. It is the supreme uniting element of the community of the faithful. It is the sacrament which contains the real Body of Christ and which has as its purpose to produce the Mystical Body of Christ, which is the Church.

We pause and draw the conclusion. The Church is then the unifying effect of the love of Christ for us. It can itself be considered a living sign, a sacrament of unity and of love. To love is her mission. While We are saying these simple and sublime words, We have around us-We almost feel it-all the Chinese people wherever they may be.

There comes to this far eastern land, for the first time in history, the humble apostle of Christ that We are. And what does he say? Why does he come? To sum it up in one word: Love. Christ is a teacher, a shepherd and a loving redeemer for China too. The Church cannot leave unsaid this good word: love, which will be forever.
