



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE BISHOPS OF KOREA
ON THEIR "AD LIMINA" VISIT***

Thursday, 23 October 1980

Dear Brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ,

1. In the special unity that we are experiencing today, our heart is glad and our spirit rejoices.

Together, we have a heightened sense of what it means to be "in Christ". For me personally it is a particular joy to welcome you, Cardinal Kim and my other brother Bishops, since in the profound mystery of collegiality, divine providence has reserved for both you and me a vital link with the history of salvation as it unfolds in the lives of all the Korean people.

Your presence here also gives expression to your awareness of the inestimable value of ecclesial communion. At the tombs of the Apostles your presence becomes a public act of thanksgiving - a solemn hymn of praise - for the *saving action of God* which takes place each day in the Church throughout Korea, and which has touched the lives of generations of your ancestors. In the words of the Psalm we can proclaim together: "Blessed be the Lord day after day, the God who saves us and bears our burdens. This God of ours is a God who saves..."^[1].

2. Indeed, the whole *history of evangelization* in Korea is recapitulated in this dynamic moment - which you are living today - of fidelity to the preaching of Peter and Paul. Your visit consolidates this history, from the first mention of the name of Jesus Christ in your land, and especially from that charismatic implantation of the faith almost two centuries ago, which took place through the instrumentality of the layman Yi Sung-hun. Called to "the obedience of faith"^[2] through the action of the Holy Spirit, your ancestors gave an heroic witness of faith, which reached its culmination in the fortitude of the Korean Martyrs.

3. That same Holy Spirit is active today and the grace of Christ is still bringing forth fruits of justice and holiness of life. How can we not praise our saving God for the signs of *Catholic vitality* found in your local Churches, for the gift of faith and Baptism constantly renewed to the edification of the universal Church! I still recall with joy how, during the Easter Vigil of this year, I personally was able to baptize and confirm a number of those who had been zealously prepared at home in Korea for Christian initiation. The Church of God which is in your midst has indeed been able to accomplish great works of faith and charity - and all in the name of Jesus himself.

4. With fidelity and perseverance you have pursued your Christian *mission of service*, giving an authentic response to Jesus' commandment of love. In schools and hospitals, through manifold works of mercy and a commitment to human advancement, your local communities have been able to give a true Christian response to human needs.

5. Although numerically small in proportion to your brothers and sisters, you have zealously rendered important service contributing to the common good. In the religious, social, cultural, political and economic fields, Catholic citizens, individually and collectively, have made worthy and highly esteemed contributions. The Church must continue to exercise her *full solicitude for the human person*, for the rights of every man, woman and child. And thus the Church will always be attentive to the pastoral challenge extended to her in the field of human rights, in which she must not cease to place her response in the context of her own proper mission, which will ever be diligently concerned for the ethical and humanitarian dimension of every question that touches human existence, recognizing indeed that, according to the teaching of Jesus, justice and mercy are among "the weightier matters of the law"^[3].

6. At the same time the Church will offer her original and distinctive contribution - which is her greatest: *the proclamation of the saving and uplifting Gospel of Jesus Christ in its fullness*. An aspect of her activity - but one which is the special inalienable right and duty of the laity - that deserves particular consideration is the activity of the laity on behalf of the renewal of the whole temporal order^[4]. There are many facets to this great task - clear goals to be envisioned and specific means to be employed - and it is not possible to treat them now. But may our Catholic laity always remember this: that they have a principal role in directing all creation to the praise of God, and of permeating the world with the spirit of Christ^[5].

7. In 1984 you will be celebrating in Korea the bicentennial of your evangelization. It will undoubtedly be an occasion of grace, strength and renewal. In conjunction with that great anniversary, you are zealously preparing a national pastoral plan for the 1980's. In this coordinated effort you have indeed a providential opportunity to promote vigorously the unity of your local Churches. In every aspect of our ecclesial activity, Christ calls us to be one in him. Hence everything that is done to promote *the unity of the episcopate and the unity of the clergy* will redound to the unity of the Body of Christ and to the effectiveness of the Church's mission. May every vital segment of the Church, every parish group, every community of religious and laity

feel the need to be united in the acceptance of the word of God and to be “faithful to the teaching of the apostles, to the brotherhood, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers”[6].

The preparation of a pastoral plan offers an excellent opportunity to embrace anew and ever more effectively - and with total priority - *the Church's mission of evangelization*. The foundation, centre and dynamic summit of this evangelization is “a clear proclamation that, in Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man, who died and rose from the dead, salvation is offered to all men, as a gift of God's grace and mercy”[7]. And what greater offering can be presented through Christ Jesus to his Father on the occasion of your bicentennial than the oblation of unity - everyone, according to the injunction of Saint Paul, “united in the same mind and the same judgment”[8]?

8. Dearly beloved Brothers: the obstacles and difficulties that face the Gospel and imperil human life and dignity are many. But let us have faith in the action of Jesus Christ. Let us trust in his sustaining grace.

Worthy of your special affection and pastoral attention are your seminaries and your seminarians.

Through the assistance of the Holy Spirit, many young men have heeded the divine invitation. Let us, on our part, make sure that their doctrinal and spiritual formation is solid, worthy of the Christ who called them to lifelong fidelity. If their training should be faulty, everything else would be defective. The only basis for priestly life and ministry is *the pure word of God's revealed truth*. Let us guard this treasure and transmit it in all its vitality through our seminaries. It is hard to imagine any responsibility more awesome than this charge which Christ the chief Shepherd has given to us as Bishops.

I ask you to assure all your priests, both diocesan and missionary, of my love in Christ. As they face the pastoral problems of each day, including those of an urbanized and migrant society, urge them to have confidence in Christ and in his abiding presence. Their greatest strength will always be in their *union with the Lord*, especially through prayer and the Eucharist.

For all men and women religious let us constantly hold up the ideal of *holiness and the wisdom of the Cross*. The measure of their effectiveness is not judged by human standards; it is found in their capacity to love Jesus and his brethren.

I commend all of you to the saving grace of Christ our Lord, and I exhort you to be filled with trust, to go forward in hope. Jesus is truly telling us: “Noli timere, pusillus grex, quia complacuit Patri vestro dare vobis Regnum”[9]. My cordial and respectful greetings go to all your non-Christian brethren with whom you live and work, with fraternal esteem and love. My prayerful good wishes go likewise to all the authorities of your country, to all the citizens of good will.

9. At this time, my thoughts turn particularly to your brothers and sisters living in North Korea,

especially to those who have suffered tribulation because of the name of Jesus and because of their fidelity to him. May they know that they are indeed not forgotten. The Church universal offers to them the assurance of her prayers and her unfailing *solidarity and love*. As we speak of them before the world, we entrust them in hope to God, who “is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think”^[10].

10. And even as we endeavour to fulfil our weighty pastoral responsibilities, we are profoundly convinced that the destiny of God’s people is in the *power of his grace*, which in turn is abundantly dispensed through the hands of his Blessed Mother Mary. She has long presided over the evangelization of your people and will continue to lead you all to Christ Jesus her Son, and through him to the Father, to whom, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, be praise and thanksgiving for ever and ever.

[1] *Ps. 68*, 19-20.

[2] *Rom. 1*, 5.

[3] *Matth. 23*, 23.

[4] Cfr. *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 7.

[5] Cfr. *Lumen Gentium*, 36.

[6] *Act. 2*, 42.

[7] *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 27.

[8] *1 Cor. 1*, 10.

[9] *Luc. 12*, 32.

[10] *Eph. 3*, 20.

