



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE BISHOPS OF PAKISTAN
ON THEIR VISIT «AD LIMINA APOSTOLORUM»**

Saturday, 16 March 1985

Dear Brothers in Christ,

1. It is a joy to come together, in the name of “Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession”, in order to celebrate *the unity of the Episcopate*. As the Successor of Peter, called by Christ to continue a special ministry of service to the universal Church and to all the Bishops, I offer you today the full measure of my fraternal encouragement. I want you to know that I am close to you in all the strenuous efforts you are making to coordinate the pastoral activities of the Church in Pakistan. Within the one Body of Christ’s Church, I assure you of my support as you strive to protect and develop Christian life in the dioceses entrusted to your care.

Christian life in Pakistan is in fact *a great witness to the love of Jesus Christ* “who went about doing good”. The vast network of *charitable and social organizations*, including hospitals, dispensaries and orphanages, express a vital and authentic Christian spirit and is part of the total Christian contribution to your country. Last Christmas your President paid a warm tribute to the Christians of your land, mentioning “their spirit of dedication in furthering the cause of Pakistan and contributing towards its progress and prosperity”. I am very grateful to him for this tribute as well as for stating Pakistan’s commitment to safeguard the “religious rights of minorities” (Message of the President of Pakistan, His Excellency General Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq).

I know all the efforts you have made in the extremely important *field of education*, as well as the many difficulties you have encountered. I praise your strong and persevering desire to transmit the life giving Gospel message, so uplifting for all humanity. I shall follow this matter with you very closely, and for everything that has already been accomplished through your ministry I offer thanks to God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

2. I am likewise deeply grateful for *the generous dedication of all the priests and religious* who are your co-workers in the Gospel. The names of the missionaries of the past are forever enshrined in the religious history of your people. Through love, they have made possible the great development of the Church, which is attested to by the fact that all the Ordinaries of your country are now Pakistani. United with you and working side by side, the local priests and the missionaries of today are called to continue their ministry, expending themselves in the work of evangelization, in every way possible. With uncertainty as to the results of their labours, with trust in the Providence of God, your priests and religious have a special role to play in living the virtue of *Christian hope*. Each one is invited to proclaim daily with the Psalmist: "My trust is in you, O Lord; I say, 'You are my God'. In your hands is my destiny".

3. I wish to express my admiration for *the faith of your people*. I know that it is lived in evangelical simplicity, in poverty and in fidelity to the communion of the universal Church. Your people live this faith with concern for their fellow human beings, including brothers and sisters who have come from outside the borders of your nation. On this occasion I repeat the sentiments that I expressed on my arrival in Karachi four years ago, regarding the *refugees*. I renew my gratitude for all the many efforts made to assist them, and I pray that these efforts will continue as long as the need persists.

4. The faith of your people is also manifested in an apostolic zeal which impels them *to transmit it*. This apostolic zeal explains the dedication of your *catechists* and of all those who work to communicate the Gospel of Christ. In a very specific way the transmission of the faith is a mission incumbent on *Christian families*. My appeal today is that everything possible be done both to confirm Christian families in a realization of the importance of their ministry of evangelization and also to assist them to fulfil it. Here we should recall the words of Paul VI: "The family, like the Church, ought to be a place where the Gospel is transmitted and from which the Gospel radiates. In a family which is conscious of this mission, all the members evangelize and are evangelized. The parents not only communicate the Gospel to their children, but from their children they can themselves receive the same Gospel as deeply lived by them. And such a family becomes the evangelizer of many other families, and of the neighbourhood of which it forms a part". The vocation of our families is truly a vocation of *Christian living, Christian service and Christian witness*. And in this way is actuated the mystery of Christ's Church.

5. In your pastoral solicitude for preparing the Church of God for the next millennium, you rightly place great hope in *the youth*. In your country they are in a very special way the embodiment of the Church's hope. At every level they deserve all the pastoral care possible. The Church has confidence in all the categories of young people, but she seeks a particular collaboration from the university students. She asks them to exercise their leadership roles as worthy followers of Jesus Christ.

At the heart of ministry to youth, we must not forget to foster consecrated *religious life*. And

because all the activity of the Church is related to the question of priestly vocation - for without priests the Church cannot be built up through the Eucharist - I encourage you in your zealous initiative. I support you not only as you promote and foster vocations but also as you strive to ensure the proper *doctrinal and spiritual preparation of all your seminarians*. May Mary, the Mother of Christ the High Priest, assist you in your hopes and plans and efforts.

6. Another area that deeply affects your lives and ministry is your relationship with your *Muslim brethren*. During the Second Vatican Council, the Church explicitly expressed her esteem for Muslims, and on my departure from Karachi I prayed that “mutual understanding and respect between Christians and Muslims, and indeed between all religions, will continue and grow deeper, and that we will find still better ways of cooperation and collaboration for the good of all”.

As examples of *common endeavours*, the Council listed “safeguarding and fostering social justice, moral values, peace and freedom”. Undoubtedly these categories offer numerous possibilities. I know that you have been trying to do much in this regard.

7. Dear brother Bishops: each one of you is the pastor of a particular Church that is indeed a *pusillus grex*. Each of your particular Churches is faced with limited possibilities and with pastoral problems. And yet, by the grace of God, each ecclesial community can live to the full its *vocation to holiness* as a hymn of praise to the God of holiness. Notwithstanding your limited resources, the Church in Pakistan has an immense contribution to make to the universal Church. You are called to fulfil your vocation to holiness through the concern of charity - the charity that you do indeed exercise so well in the name of Christ.

It is good to know that, among your many activities, you have seen fit to give special attention to the *Bible apostolate* and to relate it to the vital duty and privilege of *prayer*. The word of God is truly the strength of your people, as is its supreme sacramental proclamation in the *Eucharistic Sacrifice*. In my homily in Karachi I strove to emphasize the Eucharist as the centre of your lives and the source of your joy and holiness.

8. Because every call to holiness is a call to ecclesial unity, I encourage your priests, religious and laity to do everything possible, with you, to proclaim in faith and charity your Catholic unity among yourselves and with the universal Church. At the same time we must all work and pray for the full unity of all Christ's followers: “So that the world may believe”.

And finally let me add - for this too must be said - that it is only *in joyful hope* that the Church in Pakistan will fulfil her great calling. “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope”.

As I entrust you and your local Churches to the love of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, I also send my greetings of fraternal respect and esteem to the authorities of your country and to all your fellow-

citizens. Upon *all the people of Pakistan* I invoke the blessings of the Almighty and Merciful God.

Dear Brothers: be assured of my love in Christ Jesus our Lord!

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