



The Holy See

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

Monday, 18 November 1985

Dear Cardinal and Brother Bishops,

Praised be our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who gives us the grace of meeting again! This time in the Vatican on the occasion of your *ad Limina* visit. "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1, 3).

1. The Church in Korea of which you are the pastors is experiencing a very dynamic period in its growth and development. The seed of faith which was sought out and nurtured by the first generation of Korean Christians two hundred years ago is developing towards a maturity which is already characterized by abundant fruits of holiness and martyrdom.

With much joy and spiritual fervor you have celebrated the *Bicentennial of the Church's presence in your country*, culminating, in the canonisation of Andrew Kim and his companion martyrs, a ceremony which, through the loving kindness of our heavenly Father, I was able to perform during my visit to Korea in May of last year. I fully rejoice with you in the gifts of faith and Christian life which the Holy Spirit, the giver of Life, has bestowed on your communities in the preparation and celebration of these extraordinary events. Let us humbly recognize this time of grace, and "let us not grow weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we do not lose heart" (Gal. 6, 9).

I have followed closely the many pastoral activities which you and your collaborators have initiated and carried out, and I encourage you to continue along this path of hope, imagination and resourcefulness, in leading the portion of the Church entrusted to you towards that "charity and unity of the Mystical Body, without which there can be no salvation" (*Lumen Gentium*, 26).

This is still that “*special hour in the history of the Church in Korea*” of which I spoke when we met at the Major Seminary of Seoul on May 3, 1983. It is a time “to proclaim anew the nature of the Church, to assert her priorities, *to manifest and exemplify her holiness*”. Again I would repeat that “all the structures of the Church, all the services she renders . . . are linked to *holiness o f life* and to that zeal which only holiness can make possible and sustain over a long period of time” (Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Homilia in Seminario Maiore Seulensi habita*, passim, die 3 maii 1984: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, VII, 1 (1984) 1222 ss.).

The Council reminds us that it is above all the bishops who “by praying and laboring for the people, channel the fullness of Christ's holiness in many ways and abundantly” (*Lumen Gentium*, 26). May the Lord himself sustain you in this task, and may you feel its particular urgency as you contemplate the growth and vitality of your local Churches.

2. One of the consolations of your pastoral office and one which surely gives you confidence in relation to the future needs of the Church *in your country* is the *generous and dedicated service of your priests*, both Korean and those from other countries. Through the testimony of their lives and by teaching the word of God and administering the sacraments, they share the tasks and burdens of your ministry and assist you in making the Church of Christ truly present. They do this in response to the specific configuration with Christ himself which they received at ordination. It is important, therefore, that this special relationship to the Chief Shepherd should be made evident to everyone in their *priestly formation, life and activity*. Priests have a unique responsibility “to lead a life worthy of the calling to which (they) have been called” (*Eph. 4, 1*). Out of their “loyal association” with Christ (Cfr. *Optatam Totius*, 8), they will draw the strength to walk always in the footsteps of the One who came not to be served but to serve (Cfr. *Matth. 20, 28*), “*in a program of humble living and in a spirit of self-denial*” (Cfr. *Optatam Totius*, 9).

3. The *men and women Religious* in your dioceses are also your effective fellow-workers in the vineyard of the Lord. By placing the special charism of their lives at the service of the local Church they enable it to respond to many special needs of the evangelizing mission, while at the same time *they manifest the inner vitality o f the ecclesial community* which gives rise to such varied forms of Christian living.

Women religious especially look to your guidance, so that in full respect for the specific aim of each Institute they may find ever more effective ways of assisting in the building up of God's people and particularly in programs of pastoral life. To each of the Religious Institutes in Korea I would ask you to take my warm greetings in the love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

4. As pastors you perceive your people's need for adequate formation in the faith, in order that the grace poured out through Baptism may bear abundant fruit. The Church in Korea will benefit immensely from *a supreme effort o f catechesis and theological formation at every level*.

I am pleased to know that your Conference is implementing various programs of permanent formation for priests, including the establishment of a special center for that purpose; I know too that the Associations of Religious Superiors are doing the same for their members. Together with an intensification of the initial theological, spiritual and cultural training given in your seminaries and religious houses, this project will undoubtedly promote an increased effectiveness in the proclamation of the word and a constant renewal and improvement in the methods of evangelization and catechesis.

Your catechists and the members of lay apostolic associations, many of which are particularly deserving of recognition, should be encouraged in their efforts to acquire ever greater competence in transmitting the faith. Today no less than in the past *the laity of Korea* are called upon to express their love of the Church in a genuine *holiness of life* corresponding to their state and to their *mission of "consecrating the world itself to God"* (*Lumen Gentium*, 34).

It is heartening that the *National Pastoral Council* celebrated last year to mark the Bicentennial produced wise initiatives, some of which you have evaluated positively and are now seeking to implement.

In this respect the attention which you are giving to making the *Social Doctrine of the Church* known and understood cannot but strengthen the commitment of many Catholics who are engaged in the difficult but fruitful dialogue between faith and the surrounding culture. It is especially relevant that the Church's social teaching is to be included in the new catechism which the Bishops' Conference intends to publish. In this way the *social dimension of the Gospel message can be given renewed emphasis* and be made known to the faithful at all levels.

5. In keeping with your pastoral duty to promote and defend human dignity and because of your legitimate concern for *justice in the world of work*, you have recently published a joint Pastoral Letter on this theme. The complexity of the matter is not hidden from you; nor do you underestimate the vastness of the challenge facing society and the Church in this field. As a mother and teacher, the Church has to enlighten the consciences of individuals and of groups regarding the true value and purpose of human life and activity in God's plan. You have shown particular pastoral sensitivity to the need to give greater attention to the social development and evangelization of agricultural workers and the urban poor, especially those who are young and unemployed.

Human institutions, both private and public - as the Council teaches - "must labor to minister to the dignity and purpose of man . . . Indeed human institutions themselves must be accommodated by degrees to the highest of all realities, spiritual ones, even though meanwhile, a long time will be required before they arrive at the desired goal" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 29). Your solicitude for the values of human dignity, justice and freedom are highly commendable and have the support of the entire Church. I pray that you will succeed in leading the process of social development as *pastors*

*of a pilgrim people on its way towards “a kingdom of truth and life, of holiness and grace, of justice, love and peace” (Cfr. *ibid.* 39).*

6. In your reports in preparation for this *ad Limina* visit, you have mentioned some of the areas in which your evangelizing mission is facing special challenges. Some stem from particular conditions Korean society, others from the difficulties affecting the proclamation of the Gospel in a troubled world.

A very important part of your pastoral activity is directed to family life. *The entire Church is committed to the protection and care of the family.* By courageously proclaiming the Creator's plan for marriage and the family, the Church contributes to the well-being of the whole of society, since the family is the “first and vital cell of society” (*Apostolicam Actositatem*, 11). As indicated in the Apostolic Exhortation “*Familiaris Consortio*”, this concern extends to all families. “For all of them the Church, will have a word of truth, goodness, understanding, hope and deep sympathy” (Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Familiaris Consortio*, 65).

The “*Happy Family Movement*” which you have established has proved an excellent means of making known the Catholic teaching on marriage and the family. Couples are assisted in exercising their responsibilities according to the ethical demands of their human and Christian dignity. May God abundantly bless your efforts and strengthen the family life of your people in the face of the powerful challenges which they have to face. It is particularly appropriate that you have chosen the theme “The Eucharist and the Family” as the subject of your pastoral reflection for next year.

I have followed with great interest the various initiatives which have led to the reunion of members of families separated for many decades, and I pray that this process may continue, for the joy of those concerned and as a testimony to the world of the singular goodness of genuine family love and affection.

Your *young people* too are a particular object of your ministry. *They look to the Church for help in understanding and coping with the world in which they live.* What they expect from the Church is the truth: a truth which presents the highest ideals of justice and love, and imposes the greatest demands of humble service and persevering commitment. You have the difficult but rewarding task of accompanying with wise guidance and courageous leadership their search for *their right place in the Church and society.*

7. My dear brothers, the Lord himself is your strength and your shield (Cfr. *Ps.* 3, 3). He it is who has called you to the episcopal ministry. He has entrusted the Church in Korea to your love and service. I invoke the sanctifying gift of the Holy Spirit upon each one of you for the faithful fulfilment of this task.

May Mary, Mother of the Church, and your saintly Martyrs intercede for you before our heavenly Father. To the whole Church in Korea I gladly express my deep affection and impart my Apostolic Blessing.

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