



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO PAKISTAN, PHILIPPINES I, GUAM (UNITED STATES OF AMERICA II), JAPAN, ANCHORAGE (UNITED STATES OF AMERICA II)
(FEBRUARY 16-27, 1981)

HOLY MASS FOR VOCATIONS

HOMILY OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II

Isle of Guam

Monday, 23 February 1981

Dear brothers and sisters,

1. "There is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all ..." [1]. In these words from today's second reading, the reason for our gathering is clearly and forcefully expressed. God, our loving Father, has demonstrated his abundant care for us, his children, by allowing his own Son to be our ransom, thereby establishing him as the one mediator of the new and eternal covenant. *Seated at the right hand of the Father, Christ exercises a universal mission of salvation*—one extending to all humanity.

2. Thus the Church, as the Body of Christ, has been entrusted with *the mission of proclaiming a Gospel that is universal in its dimensions*. For in God's mysterious providence, she has been called to share in the work of salvation in order that the Savior's desire for all men to be saved [2] might be accomplished throughout the world.

At times this work appears to be overwhelming, but then the Church realizes that the word placed on her lips is the key to understanding the meaning of our earthly existence. And so an incomparable joy fills the hearts of clergy, religious and laity when the command of the Divine Master is heard once again in our time : "Go out to the whole world ; proclaim the Good News to all creation" [3].

Yes, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, ever present to console and inspire, the Church proclaims first to the Christian community and then to all humanity the marvelous tidings that Jesus is our Peace, Jesus is our Hope, Jesus is the way to everlasting life.

3. Evangelization is *the core of the Church's activity in the world*. Here lies her calling, here begins her work, here is her greatest challenge. My predecessor Paul VI explained this point so eloquently in his [Apostolic Exhortation on Evangelization](#) : "The Church remains in the world when the Lord of glory returns to the Father. She remains as a sign—simultaneously obscure and luminous—of the new presence of Jesus, of his departure and of his permanent presence. She prolongs and continues him. And it is above all his mission and his condition of being an evangelizer that she is called upon to continue"[4].

4. The Church transmits a "living" faith to the world, for when she preaches, teaches or baptizes, *Christ is made present in that event*. Thus the Gospel to be proclaimed is ever new, touching each successive generation with freshness and vitality and calling each person to a relationship with Christ that is deeply personal. And this dynamic quality of the Gospel never ceases, for the believer is called to a continual change of mind and heart in order to conform more faithfully to the mind and heart of Christ. At the same time, what a tremendous privilege is bestowed upon those who are called to be heralds of the Gospel ! What extraordinary satisfaction is discovered in communicating Christ to another !

5. Since my arrival in Guam, I have already referred to the debt of gratitude that is owed to the evangelizing spirit of those who have labored with selfless dedication to transmit the faith of Christ. The vigorous testimony of such a missionary as Father Luis Diego San Vitores, for example, continues to inspire us today. And how wonderful was the response of those who heard the word of God through the missionary's preaching.

With the celebration of the first Mass here in 1521 the seeds of the faith began to take root in the hearts of the Chamorro people. In 1668, their appreciation for the Gospel was shown by the generous gift of Chief Quipuha in donating the piece of land upon which the first Cathedral was built. And that Cathedral itself became a symbol of the dedicated perseverance of the people's faith, as the Church was forced to be reconstructed several times, the last time being within our own era. Yes, the history of the faith in Guam bears a distinguished record in the faithful witness of the men and women who have lived the Gospel in word and deed for over three centuries, even to this liturgical assembly itself.

6. But we must not be content to boast of a glorious heritage from the past without turning our attention to the demands of the present moment. Our Credo can never be considered a precious heirloom only to be admired and then tucked away for safekeeping. Rather we must express our "Amen" in what we believe by *putting our faith into practice in daily living*.

Thus we must not limit our consideration of evangelization merely to spreading the faith throughout various geographical areas of the world or among diverse cultures. We must also see that the work of evangelization touches every aspect of human life, "affecting mankind's criteria of judgment, determining values, points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life, which are in contrast with the Word of God and the plan of salvation"[5].

In this regard I wish to point out the *essential role that the family plays in the work of evangelization*. The family, as the Second Vatican Council taught us, is a "profound community of life and love"[6]. Spouses, in modeling their conjugal love after the example of Christ, cultivate in the home the Christian values of tenderness, compassion, patience and understanding ; these in turn, give rise to a life style that of itself communicates the message of the Gospel. These values are then instilled and nurtured in the children who are born of this marital love. In this way the family becomes the first school of Christian living where a love for Christ, for his Church, for his call to holiness is fostered.

At the same time, it is in the family that the necessary growth for vocations to priesthood and religious life takes place. Parents should be attentive to the earliest signs of such vocations and pray that with God's grace their son or daughter will persevere in that call. What greater blessing could come to a family than to see their efforts in living the Gospel crowned with success by having one of their own called to a life's service of preaching and teaching the Good News.

7. Upon all the baptized, then, "the glory of the Lord has risen"[7], *compelling each believer to share that light everywhere and at all times*. This light of the Gospel cannot be extinguished even though darkness may indeed envelop the values and priorities of the world. But through perseverance and prayer, the faithful are given the grace to reflect the truth which is Christ, in order that "his glory will be seen"[8]. Let us then be steadfast in the faith, modeling ourselves after the example of those distinguished evangelizers who have gone before us. Let us never grow discouraged or despondent, for Christ is with us to confirm and strengthen our every effort on behalf of the Gospel.

8. Here in *this Eucharist we celebrate the profound reality of the Church's universality*. In giving his Body and Blood for us to share, Jesus at the same time prompts us to reach out and accept all men and women as brothers and sisters. Our communion in Christ, then, compels us to share with every person the wonderful mystery of Christ's life which we ourselves have been given. In receiving the Bread of Life, we take on Christ's concern for "all men to be saved"[9].

As we once more approach that most sacred moment wherein bread and wine are transformed into the Body and Blood of our Savior, let us renew our determination to carry the presence of his word into our homes and communities, our offices and places of work, to wherever we go and in whatever we do. And, having been penetrated by the warmth of Christ's Eucharistic love, let us seek more effective ways to proclaim the message of that love to all those whom we meet.

My brothers and sisters, let the light of Christ's Gospel shine through your words and actions. Let your eyes be lifted up to Jesus, constantly drawing the attention of the world to him. Be ever joyful in the confidence that Jesus is with his Church ; that his prayer will be fulfilled ; that he does make all things new. And thus with "hearts throbbing and full"^[10], let us sing praise to the Father for the love he has bestowed on us in Christ Jesus his Son, "who gave himself as a ransom for all"^[11]. Amen.

[1] *1 Tim 2:5*.

[2] Cf. *1 Tim 2:4*.

[3] *Mk 16:15*.

[4] *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 15.

[5] *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 19.

[6] *Gaudium et Spes*, 48.

[7] *Is 60:1*.

[8] *Is 60:2*.

[9] *1 Tim 2:2*.

[10] *Is 60:5*.

[11] *1 Tim 2:5*.

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