



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO KOREA, PAPUA NEW GUINEA,

SOLOMON ISLANDS AND THAILAND

(MAY 2-11, 1984) INAUGURATION OF THE NATIONAL PASTORAL CONFERENCE
HOMILY OF POPE JOHN PAUL II "Maria Hall", Catholic medical College

Seoul - Sunday, 6 May 1984 Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, "go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Matth. 28, 19). This last command of the Risen Lord, sending out the Apostles to the ends of the earth to announce the Good News, is *the real reason why we are gathered here today*. In celebrating with joy and thanksgiving the Bicentennial of the Christian faith in your beloved land, you have resolved with God's grace *to bring* "A Light to this Land". In this National Pastoral Conference you want to pray and search together - in close collaboration with your Bishops and in union with the universal Church - for ways to make that resolve a living reality. 1. *Jesus Christ*, who entrusts you with this mission, was not only the first and the greatest evangelizer but *was himself the Good News of God* (Cf. Pauli VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 7). And so, in order to know what your mandate is and how to carry it out, you must turn to him. Jesus said: "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God... for I was sent for this purpose" (Luc. 4, 43). From that time he "began to preach, saying: 'Repent, *for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*'" (Matth. 4, 17). But what was this Kingdom all about? On Jesus' own lips, this message of hope and salvation becomes the Beatitudes: "Blessed are the poor in spirit... Blessed are those who mourn...

Blessed are the meek...

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness...

Blessed are the merciful...

Blessed are the pure in heart...

Blessed are the peacemakers...

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake...

Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account" (*Ibid.* 5, 3-11). Christ not only preaches these things. In his life and death and Resurrection he himself is the Good News of salvation (Cf. *Marc.* 1, 1; *Rom.* 1, 3). He is "the way, and the truth, and the life" (*Jo.* 14, 6). From this fact, the Second Vatican Council drew a conclusion which affects us all: "Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, *the Church must walk the same path which Christ walked*: the path of poverty, obedience, service and the sacrifice of himself unto death, from which he came forth a victor by his Resurrection. For thus did all the Apostles walk in hope" (*Ad Gentes*, 5). The first Christians had no wealth, no prestige, no power, not even church buildings. But, like Jesus himself, and because they were filled with his Spirit, they bore witness to the Good News by their own life, attracting the multitudes to conversion (*Act.* 2, 42). 2. And what of *your saintly ancestors*? They too truly believed and *lived the Beatitudes*. They made the presence of Jesus visible and credible by their lives. Only this living witness, sustained by great charity and evangelical

zeal, can explain how the Church could grow even under the cruellest persecution. Today you are asking how you in turn are to bear witness to the Good News of God's Kingdom. The Church in Korea today is widely known to be flourishing. Great things are being accomplished. For this we must raise our hearts to the Lord in *joyful thanksgiving*. Still, *many challenges face you*: how as a Church community are you to live the Beatitudes in the actual circumstances of your family, social and national life? What are you to do, in order to grow, not only in numbers, but in Christian maturity and in spiritual depth? This is what your Pastoral Conference is all about. These are the concerns that underlie your discussions and reflections.

3. You are blessed to have an enviable, indeed a priceless heritage in the eminent examples of your ancestors, to inspire and guide you as you enter into *the third century of your Christian history*. First, there is the bond of *fraternal love* that knew no barriers: nobles and ordinary people, rich and poor, they mingled, prayed and suffered together, and shared everything as brothers and sisters helping one another in adversity. No group predominated among them and none was neglected, as so frequently happens in the world. The humblest and the poorest felt quite at home in the community of faith. How will the Church in Korea have to be, so that these same virtues will be your strength? So that the poor, the workers, the outcasts will be loved and served without distinction of persons? So that the spirit of the Beatitudes will prevail over every form of discrimination and selfishness? Then there is the peerless example of *a laity full of apostolic initiative and zeal*. Following the tradition of the early pioneers who of their own initiative sought the faith, studied, prayed together and spread the Good News, groups of dedicated men and women catechists were already formed in the 1780s. In the same way the invaluable work of the Myongdo Society, the "Society to Light the Way", during the decades of persecution, should also be emulated today. May the selfless apostolate of Saint Paul Chong Hasang spur you on! Your ancestors asked neither for recompense nor for recognition, but *quietly and generously served others and spread the Gospel*. Admirable too is the life of faith they lived within the family. Of the 103 martyrs canonized today, many are of the same families, blood relatives, or descendants of martyr families. This is because *they prayed together and together came to maturity in the faith, learning to fear and love God, to cherish, respect and love every human being as God's child, all in the family*. The family is the "domestic Church", where the parents are "the first communicators of the faith to their children" and where vocations are fostered (Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 11). The truly Christian family is a "place where the Gospel is transmitted and from which the Gospel radiates" (Pauli VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 71). Building on the great spiritual and cultural traditions of Asia, in what ways will you become ever more *a Church of praying families*, and an example for the rest of the world?

4. Your forefathers in the faith made marvellous efforts to incarnate the Gospel in their own culture and national identity. In simple yet profound and beautiful language, they preached and composed songs, prayers, hymns, catechisms and devotional books that were so deeply rooted in their own culture and soul as to speak directly to the minds and hearts of the people. Such efforts, if imitated and sustained, will lead more surely to *the evangelization of the culture within its own identity*. Particularly today, when the onslaught of unassimilated foreign civilization, with other life-styles and thought-patterns, creates confusion even within Church life, your farsighted and enlightened effort here will be invaluable.

5. And, firmly rooted as they were in their own specific identity, your ancestors never ceased to seek the closest possible *union with the universal Church* in belief, worship and life. No effort, no sacrifice was spared to establish and maintain living ties with the Bishop of Peking and the Successor of Saint Peter. Saint Paul Chong Hasang travelled nine times to Peking on foot and in secret to see the Bishop there! And now, how will you seek the universal in the particular, and live the particular in such a way as to enrich the universal Church? Your Korean ancestors found the faith through China. Yet, while remaining completely true to their own identity, nevertheless they were able to be perfectly united to the universal Church. Thus they set a living example of the fact that genuine identity and true catholicity, far from being mutually exclusive, require each other. And it is good to see you, dear faithful of Korea, earnestly seeking to live that worthy heritage creatively for today tomorrow. May the great and wise people of

China who also first received the faith from without, seek, as true Chinese, to live that faith in full communion with the universal Church, to the joy and enrichment of all.⁶ Doubtless, our day and age present *wholly new challenges* with its unprecedented speed and depth of transformation. Yet, as you enter undaunted into the third century of the presence of the Church in your land, may you be guided in announcing the Good News by the fixed bearings of witness of life, reconciliation through conversion, and sharing in love, which are themes of my pastoral visit to Korea. In this way you will *bring* "A Light to this Land", but above all you will *be* "A Light to this Land". May your martyr Saints accompany you on the journey, and may our Blessed Mother Mary, the Star of the Sea, lead you and your dear ones to the heaven of her Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom "be blessing and honour and glory and might for ever and ever" (*Apoc.* 5, 13). ©

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