



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO KOREA, PAPUA NEW GUINEA,

SOLOMON ISLANDS AND THAILAND

(MAY 2-11, 1984) MASS FOR THE SICK

HOMILY OF POPE JOHN PAUL II

Saint Joseph Church - Port Moresby (Papua New Guinea)

Tuesday, 8 May 1984

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. May the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ fill your hearts! I welcome this opportunity to be with you who bear the burden of sickness and pain, and to encourage you to unite your sufferings with the sufferings of Christ.

When Jesus charged his Apostles to "preach the Gospel to the whole creation" (*Marc. 16, 15*), he promised that certain signs would accompany their work. "In my name", he said, "they will cast out demons, they will speak in new tongues... *they will lay their hands on the sick and they will recover*" (*Ibid. 16, 17.18*). These words of our Saviour reveal to us how care for the sick is closely linked to the preaching of the Gospel and forms *an important part of the Church's mission* in the world.

It is not surprising, then, that the missionaries who came to Papua New Guinea not only brought the Good News of salvation but also cared for the sick. Indeed their loving compassion for those who were suffering made a very deep impression on your ancestors. Seeing this example of charity and faith, they made the missionaries welcome among them and opened the doors of their hearts to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. With similar sentiments I come to you today. I come to tell you of my love for you in Christ, and to assure you of the pastoral concern of the whole Church. The Church, like Jesus her Redeemer, desires always *to be close to those who suffer*. She lifts them up to the Lord in prayer. She offers

them consolation and hope. She helps them to find meaning in their fear and pain by teaching them that suffering is not a punishment from God, nor something caused by witchcraft or evil spirits. Rather, the Church points to Christ who, by his Cross and Resurrection, has redeemed all human suffering and has thus given meaning to this mystery of human existence.

The Church offers grace and strength through the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. Following the ritual described by Saint James, the priest who administers this Sacrament prays over the sick person "anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord" (*Jac. 5, 14*). In this way, the Lord in his love and mercy helps the sick person with the grace of the Holy Spirit; he frees him from sin, saves him and raises him up. This sacrament of the Church is a comforting, uplifting and sanctifying experience for the sick; it is a personal encounter with Christ the Redeemer and healer of humanity.

3. Dear brothers and sisters, I want you to know how important you are in the Church, for you fulfil an irreplaceable role in her mission of salvation. When you bear your suffering in union with our saving Lord, as Saint Paul says, you "complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the Church" (*Col. 1, 24*). By uniting your sufferings with the Sacrifice of Christ, *you help others to share in Christ's Redemption*. You cooperate with Christ in bringing his salvation to Papua New Guinea and to the world.

As you try to live the mystery of suffering in union with Christ, be men and women of prayer. Saint James says: "Pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects" (*Jac. 5, 16*). Try in a special way to encourage and support your brothers and sisters who are suffering. Let your own pain borne out of love for Christ develop in you a heart of compassion and mercy. May our heavenly Father "supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (*Phil. 4, 19*). And may the love of Jesus be always in your hearts.

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