



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY
TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND CANADA

CELEBRATION OF LAUDS

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

*San Fernando Mission Church, Los Angeles
Wednesday, 16 September 1987*

“God’s flock is in your midst; give it a shepherd’s care.
Watch over it willingly as God would have you do” (1Petr. 4, 2).

Dear Brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. A very full day lies before us, *a day that the Lord has made*. It is good that we begin it by joining our voices in praise of the living God.

On this feast of Saints Cornelius and Cyprian, we have listened to the words of Peter as he appeals to his "fellow elders" to *be generous* in caring for the People of God, and to "*be examples to the flock*" (*Ibid.* 4, 3), the Church. These words of Peter are most appropriate for us as we begin this day together.

Peter describes himself as "*a witness* of Christ’s sufferings and *a sharer* in the glory that is to be revealed" (*Ibid.* 4, 1). There is no doubt in Peter’s mind about the witness he is called to bear. He is a witness of *the suffering Christ*. Perhaps he was mindful, however, of an earlier time in his life, precisely during the Passion itself, when out of fear for his own safety he had denied that he ever knew his Master. How far Peter has come from that day of sorrow and despair! For *love is more powerful than fear*, and the Lord is merciful and forgiving. The same Peter who denied his Master is now, in word and in deed, bearing witness with courage to the Crucified and Risen Christ.

2. Our task as bishops in the Church today is still centered on the person of Jesus Christ. We are witnesses to his Cross and Resurrection. Each of us has been consecrated by the Holy Spirit to be for our people a *living sign of Jesus Christ*:

- a living sign of *the praying Christ*, who himself took time during his public ministry to be alone with his Father in prayer;

- a living sign of *the compassionate Redeemer*, who healed the sick, forgave sinners and comforted the sorrowful;

- a living sign of *the love of our Saviour*, a love which is stronger than sin and death;

- a living sign of *the fidelity of the Lord*, and therefore, like Christ, *a sign of contradiction*.

In the midst of our priests and among ourselves as bishops, each of us is meant to be *a sign of Jesus' fraternal love*. And for our people we are called to be *a sign of the Good Shepherd, who came to serve and not to be served*.

"Be examples to the flock", Peter tells us. And we shall be precisely that to the extent that our lives are centered on the person of Jesus Christ.

"To him whose power now at work in us can do immeasurably more than we ask or imagine - *to him be glory in the Church* and in Christ Jesus through all generations, world without end. Amen!"
(Eph. 3, 20-21)

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