



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY
TO THE FAR EAST AND MAURITIUS

EUCCHARISTIC CELEBRATION FOR THE FAITHFUL OF SUMATRA

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

*Tuntungan (Indonesia)
Friday, 13 October 1989*

1. *Putera-puteriku dari Sumatera yang terkasih dalam Tuhan kita Yesus Kristus, Horas. Mejuah-Juah. Jahowu.*

Saya begitu gembira dapat mempersembahkan kurban Ekaristi ini, yang merupakan pusat dan puncak dari kesatuan kita, di bumi Sumatera yang diberkati ini. Dengan menyampaikan kata salam istimewa kepada para Uskup Anda, Lebih-lebih kepada Uskup Agung Medan, Monsignor Pius Datubara, Saya ucapkan selamat kepada anda semua. Juga kepada saudara-saudara Kristen Protestant dengan paduan suara mereka pada hari ini di antara kasih persaudaraan kita. Pada hari ini nyatalah kasih persaudaraan kita.

As we come together in this beautiful setting of Tuntungan, let us rejoice at *the marvellous fruitfulness with which the Church has been blessed* in Sumatera. Today there are approximately seven hundred thousand Catholics in the Archdiocese of Medan and in the Dioceses of Sibolga, Padang, Pangkalpinang, Palembang and Tanjung Karang. From humble missionary beginnings just over a hundred and fifty years ago, the seed of faith which was sown among the various peoples of this island has grown into one great tree. In her own unique way, the Church too is an example of what is stated in the national motto, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika: "unity in diversity"*.

It is with gratitude to God that, together with the Psalmist, we proclaim:

“the word of the Lord is faithful
and all his works to be trusted.
The Lord loves justice and right
and fills *the earth* with his love” (Ps. 33 (32), 4-5).

The Lord who fills the earth with his love is a God who loves justice and right.

2. In today’s Gospel one of the doctors of the Law puts the question to Jesus: “*Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?*”. But this question is not his alone. It is asked by people of every generation, nation, culture and language. *It is a question about eternal life*, about the future of man after death. In asking “what must I do?”, “how should I behave?”, men and women of every time and place acknowledge that life beyond the grave depends on how well we live this earthly life. We know that *God* is the one *who rewards goodness and punishes evil*.

The Church in Sumatra is happy that this certitude is shared by all the people of the region: with our *Christian brothers and sisters* who believe in the same Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and also with the *followers of Islam* who believe in the same good and just God. To them, our Muslim brothers and sisters, I address warm greetings, hoping that we will be as one in praising the Most High God and will work together so that future generations in Sumatra may live in a society marked by respect for God and his commandments. Truly, he is the Lord who loves “justice and right”.

“What must I do to inherit eternal life?” In the Gospel *Jesus does not directly answer* the question. He has no need to, since the man who asked it was a doctor of the Law and knew very well what is written there. The man himself provided the *right answer* by quoting the commandment of love already present in the Old Testament: (Cfr. *Deut.* 6, 4-6 et *Lev.* 19, 18) “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself” (*Luc.* 10, 27).

Jesus confirms the correctness of this reply: “You have answered right; do this, and you will live” (*Ibid.* 10, 28), that is, you will have *eternal life*.

3. But then the lawyer goes on to ask a further question of Jesus: “*Who is my neighbour?*”. In order to answer this, the Lord makes use of the parable of the Good Samaritan, which graphically depicts how we ought to treat every person if we wish to live by God’s commandment of love.

Through this moving parable Christ is telling us that *we must behave like the Samaritan. We must be open to others, we must approach them, be concerned for them, and help especially those who are most in need*.

Our model for this behaviour is *the compassion and mercy which we ourselves have received* from God. For the parable of the Good Samaritan is first and foremost a message concerning the

person of Jesus Christ himself. Christ, the Son of God, is the Good Samaritan *par excellence*: he is the Saviour who finds humanity half-dead by the roadside and stops to heal our wounds. By his death on the Cross, he revealed “the tender mercy of our God” (*Luc.* 1, 78), who desires that all men be saved. By his Resurrection, he restored us to life, to spiritual health. And in return he invites us to love others as he himself has loved us.

Our love of neighbour, then, is nothing other than *our response to the love with which God has first loved us*. We who have been shown compassion surely cannot refuse it to others. Nor may we forget that *whatever we do for those in need we do to Christ himself* (Cfr. *Matth.* 25, 40). On the night before he died, Jesus washed the feet of his disciples, and told them that he had given them an example, that “they also should do as he had done” (Cfr. *Jo.* 13, 15). Through our love of neighbour, we not only imitate the love of Christ for us, we also fulfil his supreme commandment of love.

In Christ, love of neighbour is the highest expression of the solidarity which binds together all people throughout the world. This solidarity is not just a vague emotion; it is a *reality rooted in Christ's Incarnation*. For by “assuming human nature (Christ) united all humanity to himself in a supernatural solidarity which makes us one single family. He has made charity the distinguishing mark of his disciples, in the words: 'By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another' (*Ibid.* 13, 35)” (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 8). Christ teaches a love that is universal, for *all persons are neighbours to one another*, regardless of origin, race, culture or religion.

4. Today's first reading from the Letter to the Hebrews gives some concrete examples of human need when it exhorts us: “*Let brotherly love continue*. Do not neglect to show hospitality... Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them; and those who are ill-treated, since you also are in the body” (*Hebr.* 13, 1-3). In different ways, each of these commands echoes the *golden rule* which the Lord taught *in the Sermon on the Mount*: “Whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them” (*Matth.* 7, 12).

To the stranger and the imprisoned we can add the sick, the disabled, the aged, orphans, and all those who are poor, oppressed or rejected in the world.

I know that in Sumatra you are working hard to promote a *more human society* through economic development and greater social justice. Your Christian vocation challenges and inspires you to do all you can to further these worthy goals. Your yearning for God's Kingdom should *increase, not diminish* your desire to humanize the earth in anticipation of the world to come. You have a Christian responsibility to contribute to authentic human development, to promote greater justice, love and peace, to bring to the world a vision of unity based on the *dignity of every human being* created in the image and likeness of God (Cfr. *Gaudium et Spes*, 33-45). I recommend this particular task and responsibility to you, sons and daughters of the Church in Sumatra, so that

here in this land the principle underlined by the Second Vatican Council will take hold: “In the socio-economic realm, too, the dignity and total vocation of the human person must be honoured and advanced along with the welfare of society as a whole. For man is the source, the centre, and the purpose of all socio-economic life” (*Ibid.* 63).

As Catholics, you help to give economic and social development a human soul, a human heart, by bringing to it the compassion and personal commitment of the Good Samaritan. This is a task which you share with the members of other Christian Churches as you seek greater mutual understanding and collaboration with them, bearing in mind the strength of the bonds that unite us in Christ through our Baptism and our common profession of him as Lord and Saviour. Indeed, *by joining with all believers in bearing witness to God*, the “Father of mercies and the God of all comfort” (2 *Cor.* 1, 3), you show yourselves to be loving neighbours to all. For it is no small kindness to remind others of the primacy of God in their lives. Without belief in God there can be no enduring love of neighbour, no true human development, no lasting peace.

5. The doctor of the law asked Jesus, “what must I do to *inherit eternal life*?”. This is the most fundamental of all questions, for as the Letter to the Hebrews tells us: “Here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city which is to come” (*Hebr.* 13, 14). Our earthly existence has no meaning without reference to the fullness of that life which is to come.

Christ has shown us the way to that life. He taught us a new norm of conduct. The parable of the Good Samaritan, with its message of universal love of neighbour, is the foundation of a new concept of relations between people and of life in society. In the power of Christ’s love, people’s lives are transformed, making them worthy heirs of eternal life.

In this part of the world where the hope of eternal life is strong among the followers of all religions, it is only right to ask the whole of Sumatran society to unite in *defending and fostering the religious character of life* and its openness to transcendent values. Christians, as well as the followers of Islam, are called to be heralds of this supreme good and to share it with those who have lost it. Be proud to bear witness to other peoples – beyond the sea, to the far off islands – that this dynamic people is built on the foundation stone of the primacy of God and his promises.

The Lord who fills the earth with his love is a God who loves justice and right.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ: May the entire Church in Sumatra draw courage to live and grow in the spirit of the Good Samaritan. May all assembled here at this solemn Eucharistic celebration in Medan seek in every way to follow faithfully the word of the Lord, and to serve him in “justice and right”. *For he is the Lord* – the Lord who fills the *earth with his love* (Cfr. *Ps.* 33 (32), 5). Amen.

Semoga karena Gereja Katolik semua orang dan masyarakat, khususnya mereka yang miskin dan

lemah, bergembira, memuliakan dan memuji Tuhan. Semoga Gereja di Sumatera membantu masyarakat menemukan keadilan dan memuliakan martabat manusia. Semoga Tuhan memberkati Anda semua.

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