



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)

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO REPRESENTATIVES OF CATHOLIC ORGANIZATIONS AND MOVEMENTS**

Cathedral of Jaro, Iloilo
Friday, 20 February 1981

Dear brothers and sisters,

I have come to Iloilo City to tell you all of my love in Christ Jesus. I greet all the inhabitants of this city and all the people of this large Archdiocese of Jaro. I wish to express my fraternal esteem for the priests and sisters who labor in this sector of the Lord's vineyard, and to offer you my encouragement and support as you endeavor day after day to proclaim the Gospel of God by word and example, and to build up the community of the faithful.

1. In a very special way, however, the providence of God has determined that this part of my visit should be devoted to a meeting with *the Catholic laity and, in particular, with representatives of their various associations and movements*. My dear lay brothers and sisters : in you I greet the heirs of the Catholic faith that is *deeply rooted in the tradition and culture of the Filipino people*. I give thanks to God for the love and zeal that is in you, that has been implanted in you by the Spirit of Jesus. I feel very close to you today ; I feel as though you are telling me that you appreciate your mission in the Church, and that you wish to be strengthened and encouraged in your Christian vocation as lay people consecrated in Baptism and united to Christ by faith. And this is why I have come : to speak to you about your Christian dignity—what it means to belong to Christ ; about *the responsibility of your mission* and about *the urgency of the task* that Christ has entrusted to you.

2. Yes, dear lay people, *Jesus Christ himself through your Baptism and Confirmation has commissioned you to the lay apostolate*, that wonderful sharing in the saving mission of his Church[1]. Your mission and your destiny are forever linked with Christ the Savior of the world.

You have a specific role to fulfill in the application of God's plan of redemption. The Second Vatican Council has spoken of the need to recognize the relationship of all creation to the praise of God. It has called you, by your activity in the world, to help one another to attain an ever greater holiness of life, "so that this world may be filled with the spirit of Christ and may more effectively attain its destiny in justice, in love and in peace"[2].

3. In order to do this, *you must remain united with Christ*. His words are the basis for your effectiveness : " I am the vine, you are the branches ... apart from me you can do nothing"[3]. Indeed, he is calling you this very day to a greater love, because he is inviting you to constant conversion of heart. He is calling you to greater union with himself in his Church, for it is there that you find him. And union with Christ in his Church is the essential condition for all your apostolic effectiveness. It is Christ who entrusts you with your mission, but a mission that is coordinated within the unity of his Body by the pastors of the Church. This explains the great value there is in a loving communion of faith and discipline with your Bishops who, in the words of the Letter to the Hebrews, "must give an account of the way they look after your souls"[4].

4. You have heard the Good News of salvation and embraced it with joy, bringing forth fruits of justice and holiness of life. But it is important that the grace of faith should develop in you and in all believers with God's help, and lead you to a deeper knowledge of the person and message of our Lord Jesus Christ[5]. *The need for a systematic catechesis is one of the greatest needs of the Church in this day*. It is a great challenge for you as Filipino Catholics. As laity, you are called, individually and collectively, to meet this challenge.

5. Among all the opportunities open to you for the exercise of the individual apostolate, the family occupies a place of primary importance. The family can provide an effective response to the secularization of the world; *the family has a special charism for transmitting the faith and for assisting in developing an initial evangelization*.

Within the intimacy of the family, every individual can find an opportunity to give personal witness to the love of Christ. Parents have the right and duty to catechize their children ; they have the immense privilege of being the first ones to teach their children to pray. In the words of my predecessor John Paul I, I would like to "encourage parents in their role as educators of their children—the first catechists and the best ones. What a great task and challenge they have : to teach children the love of God, to make it something real for them. And by God's grace, how easily some families can fulfill the role of being a *primum seminarium*: the germ of a vocation to the priesthood is nourished through family prayer, the example of faith and the support of love" (September 21, 1978).

6. Besides the varied opportunities for exercising the individual apostolate, I strongly recommend intensification of the *group apostolate* through Catholic organizations and Church-inspired lay movements.

I mention with profound gratitude the invaluable service rendered to the Church by Catholic organizations in the past decades. Their dedication to the lay apostolate according to the charisms of their respective goals has merited the admiration of the hierarchy and I wish to add my own appreciation. Undoubtedly, certain changes and adaptations may be desirable in order to make these organizations and movements better suited to meet the present needs of the apostolate, but the existence of these associations and groups continues to be of great help to the mission of the Church.

In consultation with your Bishops and the pastors of your parishes, be open to new methods of apostolic activity in order to build up continuously the Body of Christ. Small Christian communities, where personal exchanges and the practice of fraternal love and solidarity can be more easily achieved, open vast opportunities for creativeness in the apostolate. Remember all the time that the effectiveness of your activity in the apostolate depends on your unity with the hierarchy and among yourselves.

Your apostolate will be fruitful to the degree that you are faithful and are firmly attached to the local Church in which you are inserted, and to the universal Church[6].

7. A consistent collective Christian commitment by the Philippine lay people is felt not only in the ecclesial community. It is also an immense force *bringing the power of the Gospel to bear on culture*, transforming and regenerating it. Working in accordance with their ecclesial nature, your associations and movements are especially effective means for proclaiming the Church's commitment to the dignity of the human person and to the advancement of the freedom and rights of all Filipinos. The People of God, who have been given God's peace, must always be collectively intent on promoting that human justice which is a requirement of social peace.

8. My brothers and sisters : you will not be surprised if at times the most worthy initiatives are subject to human frailty and to opposition from others. *Vigilance is always a condition for Christian freedom*—the vigilance expressed above all in prayer. Jesus told his disciples : "Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation"[7]. *Ideological temptations* may present themselves and divisions may arise, but the grace of Christ is sufficient for you—Christ's grace calling you to unity and fraternal love, Christ's grace transforming you into a people of hope.

Jesus Christ has truly called you to share his salvific mission, and to build up the communion of his Church. At the same time he prepares us for Christian effort and victory : " In the world you will have affliction, but have confidence, I have overcome the world"[8]. And in over-coming the world in everything that is sinful and corrupt, you will at the same time, in union with Christ, be able to

offer to the Father the glory of creation, and to direct it to the praise of the Most Holy Trinity.

As lay people in the world you can make a unique contribution, in an ecclesial role, to the Church's dialogue of salvation. You can offer to the world not only the message of Christ but also its concrete application in your lives, thus furthering the very spirit of dialogue in friendship and service and love. My dear brothers and sisters : This is *your dignity and your strength: to remain united with Christ, sharing his salvific mission*, promoting his cause, building up his kingdom of truth and life, holiness and grace, justice, love and peace. You do this day after day, week after week, in the ordinary yet extremely important setting of your daily Christian lives.

9. And remember always that *Mary the Mother of God* is with you. She is the Mother of mercy and fair love, who has been watching over the Filipino people for centuries and will continue *to preside over your destiny* in the years to come. She will lead you to her Son and assist you in communicating him to others—in communicating Jesus to the world.

[1] Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 33.

[2] *Lumen Gentium*, 36.

[3] *Jn* 15:5.

[4] *Heb* 13: 17.

[5] Cf. *Catechesi Tradendae*, 19.

[6] Cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 58.

[7] *Mt* 26:41.

[8] *Jn* 16:33.

