



# The Holy See

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APOSTOLIC JOURNEY  
TO THE FAR EAST AND MAURITIUS

MEETING WITH THE BISHOPS, PRIESTS,  
MEN AND WOMEN RELIGIOUS OF INDONESIA

*ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II*

*Cathedral of the Assumption, Jakarta  
Tuesday, 10 October 1989*

*Dear Brother Bishops,  
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

1. *"Rahmat dan damai dari Allah Bapa dan Tuhan Yesus Kristus beserta anda" (Rom. 1, 7).*

It is my special joy to meet you, the *priests and men and women religious of Indonesia*, in this Cathedral of the Assumption, the oldest Catholic cathedral in your country. It is a day for us to *celebrate together the goodness of the Lord*. It is also an opportunity for me to encourage you to *persevere and to grow in the vocation to which God has called you* in the service of the Gospel. Although the Church here is comparatively young, she is rich in grace and blessings. And as you experience the joys as well as the challenges of her growth, I wish to assure you that you are close to my heart. I offer you my encouragement and my love.

You who are today's generation of priests are heirs to the high ideals of the great missionaries who selflessly laid the foundations of the Church in Indonesia. Many of them were personally known to you. You were confirmed by their faith and led to the Lord's service through their example. Our thoughts turn to those *"faithful stewards"*, who have now been called to their eternal reward but whose memory lives on. The example of their Christian life and witness is their legacy, and even now they are interceding with God for the continued fruitfulness of that part of the Lord's

vineyard which they cultivated with such loving care. One thinks of Father van Lith of Java, as well as of intrepid pastors of more recent times, such as the renowned Bishop Thijssen who laboured in Lesser Sunda, and Archbishop van den Hurk, so recently taken from us.

The high esteem in which you are held today by the Indonesian people, including those who are not Christian, is due in great measure to the *dedication and moral integrity* of those who have gone before you. But their powerful example also constitutes a challenge, since your Churches today continue to need holy and wise priests who are able to show the right path, however daunting or difficult.

2. I also wish to address all *the religious sisters and brothers*. I thank you for your consecrated witness in the Church and in the world, and for your numerous apostolates. My *special greeting goes to the various groups of contemplative nuns and to the Trappist Fathers* whose silent witness and prayerfilled service is so precious to the Church's life and mission.

So many of the Church's activities in Indonesia have been conducted under the intelligent and experienced direction of religious. Mention must be made of your work in *Catholic education and catechesis*, and in the important fields of *health care and human development services*. Catholic schools in particular enable you to advance the human knowledge and virtue of others, while at the same time making it possible for you to speak to them about Christ.

By combining the missionary zeal of religious from abroad with the fresh enthusiasm of Indonesian-born religious, you have given new life and fervour to your charisms. By maintaining your identity as religious and by persevering in your apostolates, you too have earned the love and respect of the laity and have drawn young people to your way of life. This example is a great gift not only for Indonesia, but for the whole Church.

3. "*Laetentur insulae multae*" – "*Let the many islands rejoice*" (Ps. 96 (95), 1). These words of the Psalm served as the motto for one of the missionary bishops of Batavia in the last century. To you, the priests and religious of this largest archipelago in the world, I commend this motto as a key to unlock the true meaning of your lives. You will find that meaning *in bearing witness to the joy of the Resurrection and in giving your life* so that even the most distant islands may "rejoice" at hearing the Gospel, of which you are authentic preachers, teachers and witnesses.

In order that your witness may be credible, your lives must radiate *joy and courage* even in the face of adversity. This is possible only when your interior life is characterized by close communion with Christ, which is nourished through personal prayer and the practice of pastoral charity. To the degree that you grow according to the model of Christ, you will be transformed into his image. You will become *a sign of hope and a living proclamation* of the Resurrection.

I know that you often have to carry out your mission with means that are totally disproportionate to

the task entrusted to you. Service of this kind requires great personal sacrifice and total dedication to God's people. This is especially true in the most *remote Churches*: those in Kalimantan, the Moluccas, Irian and Sulawesi. Although I am not able to visit these communities personally, I know that they are represented here today, and I wish to greet them and to assure them that they too are close to my heart.

4. Although your work in the Lord's vineyard is often arduous, you can take great encouragement from the number of *vocations to the priesthood and religious life* that enrich the Church in Indonesia today. I join you in giving thanks for the work of the Holy Spirit, who has been poured forth in such abundance upon your Churches. Over the last seven years the number of Indonesian priests has increased from less than eight hundred to over eleven hundred – an unparalleled blessing in our times. I also join you in thanking the *Catholic families* of Indonesia, in particular the parents who have so generously given their sons and daughters to the service of God.

Vocations are a sign of the healthy state of religious life as well as the result of the dedicated ministry of bishops and priests. It is *preaching by good example* that leads young people to embrace a life of total consecration and of ministry. Both foreign missionaries and Indonesian-born clergy, working closely together, have given a shining example of Christian life and service. Although there have been obstacles to the continued presence of the missionaries, this very problem has been turned to the Church's good: such is the power of faith!

Since the building up of the Church is the work of God, we must never cease to *pray for vocations and ask others to do the same*. Although much has been accomplished, there is still more to be done: "The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest" (*Luc. 10, 2*).

5. Dear brothers and sisters, we must also *look to the future* even as we give thanks for the blessings of the past and the graces of the present. Once initial evangelization has been completed, a new task begins: *the task of forming consciences and of interiorizing the faith*. This calls for renewed commitment on your part, a commitment which is absolutely necessary if the Gospel is to strike deep roots in Indonesian life and culture. Formation serves to nurture the fragile and still vulnerable plant in its early stages of growth.

You will want to provide the Catholic people with the formation needed to ensure that their acceptance of Christ, nourished within the Church, will become part of the very fabric of their lives without lapsing into mediocrity or compromise. There is need to form *strong, responsible laity* who recognize that faith embraces every aspect of life, and who consciously participate in the Church's mission within the family, at work, and in social and public life.

Much of the Church's effort is already directed towards formation through the many Institutes which have been established in Indonesia, especially those conducted by the various religious

communities. Great attention has been given to human development, and this is certainly a worthy goal. But *authentic human development must be rooted in an ever deeper evangelization*. Perhaps it is time to identify new forms of pastoral outreach, in close cooperation with the bishops, according to the spirit of the Gospel parable which praises the scribe who was capable of bringing out of his treasure “what is new and what is old” (*Matth.* 13, 52).

*Formation* is not meant only for the laity. *Priests and religious* also need to deepen their faith through lifelong study and reflection in keeping with their state in life and the needs of their apostolates. The aim is to grow in knowledge and love of Christ and the Church her teaching, worship and discipline – so that we may be sure of – “speaking the truth in love” and of “growing up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body upbuilds itself” (Cfr. *Eph.* 4, 15-16).

Reflection on the future of the Church in Indonesia should also take into account the *complementary roles of clergy and laity*, as well as their *unity in the Eucharist*, which is the “source and summit of all evangelization” (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 5) and “of all Christian life” (*Lumen Gentium*, 11). The presence of sacred ministers among God’s people is part of his providence, and I commend the priests in Indonesia for carrying out so faithfully the ministry of word and sacrament in communion with their bishops. I am aware of the sacrifice and constant travel required of them in order to bring that presence to the faithful.

But when it is difficult for the priest to bring his unique ministry to people, there is a temptation to resort to alternatives. While new forms of ecclesial service and lay involvement are to be welcomed, they cannot substitute for the ministry of priests. There is *a complementarity of roles between clergy and laity that is essential* for the Church’s life and mission. If on a regular basis the laity are entrusted with roles and responsibilities that belong to ordained ministers, then the Church’s life suffers and the local communities are deprived of the ministry to which they are entitled.

In this regard I wish to draw special attention to the Eucharist. I commend you for all the efforts that have been made to renew the Liturgy in accordance with the directives of the Second Vatican Council. At the same time I also ask you to make *the celebration of the Eucharist a special priority*. For many Indonesian Catholics the Mass is still a luxury reserved for only a few days of the year. Having just participated in the Eucharistic Congress in Seoul, I am strengthened in my resolve to invite all the priests of Indonesia to commit themselves to making the Eucharist *the true centre of every community*.

Participation in the Church’s life and mission is not limited, of course, to the Liturgy. There are *many forms of Catholic association* that should be welcomed and even strengthened, if they are deemed appropriate and useful in a given socio-cultural context. In this work too, priests and religious have a special role to play.

6. Dear brothers and sisters, these reflections concerning the pilgrim path of the Church in Indonesia should fill all of us with new hope. The wealth of charisms among the various religious families, the growth of the diocesan clergy, and the ever deeper faith of your people, are all *signs of a new springtime of the Spirit* which is blossoming in this land so richly blessed by God.

I urge you to use God's gifts wisely. Much has been gained through the *sacrifices and wise choices* of those who have gone before you. Their decision to be *models of service* has greatly assisted the spread of the Gospel in Indonesia. May you be equally blessed with wisdom in order to continue the work of the Church in response to *the further challenges of evangelization today*. You can rely on the wealth of spiritual gifts that have been poured out on the Church. Above all, you can rely on "that *power of God at work within us*, which is able to do far more than all that we ask or think" (Cfr. *Eph. 3, 20*).

May the Mother of God, so highly venerated among you, Saint Francis Xavier, a great evangelizer of this land, and Saint Therese of the Child Jesus, so dear to the heart of Indonesian Catholics, obtain for you the *grace to persevere in the faith and to be courageous witnesses* to the Gospel.

*Akhirnya, saya dengan senang hati akan memberikan Berkat Apostolik kepada Anda sekalian.*

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