



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO THE FAR EAST AND MAURITIUS

MEETING WITH THE BISHOPS OF INDONESIA

REFLECTION OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II ON THE APOSTOLIC JOURNEY

Apostolic Nunciature, Jakarta

Friday, 13 October 1989

I greet all the bishops gathered here, the bishops of Indonesia, and I express my gratitude for this visit as a lived experience. Providence has given me, has given us the possibility of this experience. Before the visit I prepared a text addressed to the bishops, and I shall distribute the copies of the text provided for this occasion. But after the experience of this visit, I should say that all that constitutes the content of this letter, of this speech is true, but for me it is not quite sufficient. So I should analyse this visit, the many aspects of this visit, once again. I should reflect upon so many elements I have lived here, I have seen, I have heard, I have experienced – to arrive at a personal and deeper vision of what Indonesia is and of what the Church in Indonesia is. What is Indonesia? That is, of course, a question for history. Asking what Indonesia is, we ask at the same time what Indonesia was, the ancient part of the world of humanity, of so many people. What especially is modern Indonesia, Indonesia of the last forty-five years?

And then, what is the Church in this context, and then, what was it in the former, historical context? Christianity in Indonesia, for instance in Flores, is some centuries old. But today we see a new realization of the same Christianity, of the same Church. It seems to me that this new realization corresponds deeply to the vision of Vatican II. It is necessary to have before our eyes, before our mind, the vision of the Church in herself and of the Church in the world, according to the documents of Vatican II, and then to enter into this experience. Yesterday in the seminary at Maumere I was asked why I am making this visit. So I answered that I am making the visit

because our Lord has said. “Go to the ends of the earth”, but because of Vatican II I have a special reason for doing so. It seems to me that Vatican II has not only facilitated but stimulated such an exercise of the Petrine office in the Church. And as it facilitates the following of the main idea of Vatican II, we feel that the best realization of this main idea is simply this: go, experience, meet, talk, touch. The Pope, of course, has a duty, a duty expressed by our Lord, and then by many of the Fathers, Saint Irenaeus and others: the duty of maintaining the unity and the universality of the Church. In our time, this task of maintaining the unity and universality of the Church may be realized and obtained in this way: to touch; to hear; to participate. Of course, my experience of Indonesia and of the Church in Indonesia is not complete. It is only partial, some points of this great area, with its vast expanses of water, its many islands and people.

This is not enough. I especially deeply regret that I could not visit the northern and north-eastern part of Indonesia, but I shall try at least to complete the vision. It is a growing Church that is visible, maturing. It was a missionary Church. Here among us there are several missionary bishops, especially Dutch bishops who brought Christianity to Indonesia. But now it is an Indonesian Church, and here the majority of the bishops are Indonesian, and they are taking in hand more and more the responsibility for the Church and the future of the Church, and also for the future of society.

I should perhaps say a word about the part played by the men and women religious missionaries in this great apostolic task. But I was deeply touched, especially yesterday, by the presence, activities and apostolate of the lay people. Some elements – I present them together with the text already prepared – seem to me to be new, to be directly experienced during this visit. I shall continue my reflections together with my brother Cardinals, the whole Roman Curia, the Secretary of State, and especially with the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. I am sure that Cardinal Tomko also has his special observations, his special experiences during this visit. We shall reflect together after our return to Rome on how to deepen this experience, how to make this Indonesian experience more fruitful for us, for the Church of Rome, for the Holy See which has the responsibility for the unity and universality of the Church. But how do we make this experience more fruitful for you also, for the Church in Indonesia? You know that the structure, the spiritual, divine and human structure of the Church is the structure of communion; and what is communion? “[Lumen Gentium](#)” says that communion is bringing; one brings to the others, the others receive, and, in receiving, they also bring: it is exchange. I hope that the Church in Indonesia can bring very new forces, a very new life, very new elements, very new charisms of the Spirit to the universal Church, to the Church in different places in the world, to the world in the different continents.

So, I finish this allocution which is not prepared in writing, but prepared in my heart, not complete, but to be completed.

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