



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)

HOLY MASS FOR THE BEATIFICATION OF LORENZO RUIZ

HOMILY OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II

Manila (Philippines)

Wednesday, 18 February 1981

Dear brothers and sisters in the Lord,

1. The City of Manila and all the Philippines are filled with joy on this day as they sing *a hymn of glory to Jesus Christ*. For, according to his Gospel promise, Christ is truly acknowledging, in the presence of his Father in heaven, those faithful martyrs who acknowledged him before men^[1]. And because of the nearness of Luneta Park to old Manila "intra muros", the hymn of glory to God which has just been sung by numberless voices is an echo of the Te Deum sung in the Church of Santo Domingo on the evening of December 27, 1637, when the news arrived of the martyrdom at Nagasaki of a group of six Christians. Among them were the head of the mission, Father Antonio González, a Spanish Dominican from León, and Lorenzo Ruiz, a married man with a family, born in Manila "extra muros" : in the suburb of Binondo^[2].

These witnesses had also in their turn sung psalms to the Lord of mercy and power, both while they were in prison and during their execution by the gallows and the pit, which lasted three days. The song of these "designated" martyrs—to use a definition made by my predecessor Benedict XIV—was followed in Manila, then as now, by the song of thanksgiving for the martyrs now "consummated" and "glorified". *Te martyrum candidatus laudat exercitus*: they belonged indeed to a white-robed throng, whose members included those of the white legion of the Order of Preachers.

2. Our hymn is at same time *a hymn of faith that conquers the world*[3]. The preaching of this faith enlightens like the sun all who wish to attain the knowledge of truth. Indeed, although there are different languages in the world, the power of the Christian tradition is the same. And so, as Saint Irenaeus explains, the Churches founded in Germany or in Spain believe and teach no differently from the Churches founded in the East or in the central parts of the world[4].

I therefore greet with deep affection in Christ Jesus the European Churches in Italy, France and Spain, and the Asian Churches in Taiwan, Macau, the Philippines and Japan, represented here or at least spiritually united to this ceremony of the beatification of sixteen martyrs who belong to them by birth, apostolic work or martyrdom.

3. The Lord Jesus by his blood truly redeemed his servants, gathered from every race, tongue, people and nation, to make them a royal priesthood for our God[5]. The sixteen blessed martyrs, by the exercise of their priesthood—that of baptism or of Holy Orders—performed *the greatest act of worship and love* of God by the sacrifice of their blood united with Christ's own Sacrifice of the Cross. In this way they imitated Christ the priest and victim in the most perfect way possible for human creatures[6]. It was at the same time an act of the greatest possible love for their brethren, for whose sake we are all called to sacrifice ourselves, following the example of the Son of God who sacrificed himself for us[7].

4. This is what Lorenzo Ruiz did. Guided by the Holy Spirit to an unexpected goal after an adventurous journey, he told the court that he was a Christian, and must die for God, and would give his life for him a thousand times[8].

Kahit maging sanglibo man
 Ang buhay n'yaring katawan
 Pawa kong ipapapatay,
 Kung inyong pagpipilitang
 Si Kristo'y aking talikdan.

(Had I many thousands of lives I would offer them all for him. Never shall I apostatize. You may kill me if that is what you want. To die for God—such is my will.)

Here we have him summed up ; here we have a description of his faith and the reason for his death. It was at this moment that this young father of a family professed and *brought to completion the Christian catechesis that he had received* in the Dominican Friars' school in Binondo: a catechesis that cannot be other than Christ-centered, by reason both of the mystery it contains and the fact that it is Christ who teaches through the lips of his messenger[9].

This is the Christian essence of the first Beatus of the Philippine nation, today exalted as a fitting climax to the fourth centenary of the Archdiocese of Manila. Just as the young Church in Jerusalem brought forth its first martyr for Christ in the person of the deacon Stephen, so *the*

young Church in Manila, founded in 1579, *brought forth its first martyr* in the person of Lorenzo Ruiz, who had served in the parish church of Saint Gabriel in Binondo. The local parish and the family, the domestic church, are indeed the center of faith that is lived, taught and witnessed to.

5. The example of Lorenzo Ruiz, the son of a Chinese father and Tagala mother, reminds us that *everyone's life and the whole of one's life must be at Christ's disposal*. Christianity means daily giving, in response to the gift of Christ who came into the world so that all might have life and have it to the full^[10]. Or, as so aptly expressed in the theme of my visit to this country : *To die for the faith is a gift to some; to live the faith is a call for all*.

I too have come from the city of the martyrs Peter and Paul to this capital city to speak to you about the meaning of our existence, about the value of living and dying for Christ. And that is what I wish to affirm by this act of beatification, desired by myself and by my predecessor Paul VI, and requested by the various local Churches and by the Dominican Order.

6. But the attractive figure of the first Filipino martyr would not be fully explained in its historical context without *extolling the witness given by fifteen companions*, who suffered in 1633, 1634 and 1637. They form the group led by two men : Domingo Ibáñez de Erquicia, the vicar provincial of the Japanese mission and a native of Régil in the Spanish Diocese of San Sebastián ; and Jacobo Kyuhei Tomonaga, a native of Kyudetsu in the Diocese of Nagasaki.

Both of these belonged to the Dominican Province of the Holy Rosary in the Philippines, established in 1587 for the evangelization of the Far East. The whole group of Lorenzo's companions was composed of nine priests, two professed brothers, two members of the Third Order, and a catechist and a guide-interpreter. Nine were Japanese, four were Spaniards, one a Frenchman, and one an Italian. They had *one reason for their evangelical witness*: the reason of Saint Paul, baptized by Ananias *to carry the name of Christ to all peoples*^[11]: "We have come to Japan only to preach faith in God and to teach salvation to little ones and to the innocent and to all the rest of the people". Thus did the martyr Guillaume Courtet sum up their mission before the judges at Nagasaki^[12].

7. I shall have the joy of speaking again about these brave apostles in a few days' time, in Nagasaki, near that holy hill called Nishizaka, where they suffered martyrdom. *By their place of death they are all Japanese*. That archipelago was the land of their true and definitive birth, the birth that brings the adopted children of God to eternal light.

8. For the moment, as we consider the place where they are being beatified, I would dwell upon the fact that the city of Manila, the island of Luzón and the island of Formosa, which at time came under a single civil government, were the wide and providential starting-point of the nine priests who later sailed for Nagasaki. There was a ministry among the Chinese of the suburb of Bínondo, among the Japanese colony in Manila, among the peoples of the regions of Bataán, Pangasinán,

Cagayán, and, further north, in Formosa. For some of them there was a teaching assignment in the College of Santo Tomás in Manila, which in 1645 became the present Pontifical University, the oldest and the largest Catholic university in the Far East.

Four of the new Beati were professors in the College, one was also the Rector, and a fifth had studied there. In the first century of the evangelization of the Far East, begun by the preaching of Saint Francis Xavier, the Philippine Islands had already, in this university institution, a further means of carrying out the mission of evangelization[13]. A fruitful program aimed at imparting theological knowledge and propagating the faith, which still today is enhanced by the cultural heritage of the Philippines and vivified by the Christian spirit, is a fitting instrument for assisting the spread of the Gospel[14].

The harmonious mingling of faith and culture is spoken of by the Filipino poet and national hero José Rizal, in these verses :

Tal la Educación estrecha alianza
 Con alma Religión une sincera:
 Por ella Educación renombre alcanza ;
 Y ay ! del ser que ciego desechando
 De santa Religión sabias doctrinas,
 De su puro raudal huye nefando.[15]

All the more therefore, it is my duty and the object of my apostolic ministry to confirm my brethren in the truth[16], and to repeat to the missionaries, to the students of theological and human sciences, as well as to all the Catholics of East Asia, the words of Christ : "You shall be my witnesses ... to the ends of the earth"[17].

9. Let us endeavor *to imitate the commitment to faith and the fidelity to commitment* of those who, through their difficult missionary task, accepted with joy and steadfastness hard journeys, difficulties of climate, betrayal even by their friends, privations of every kind and terrible tortures. They were so much in love with Christ's Passion that they could cry out, like Miguel de Aozaraza contemplating Christ's wounds : "What beautiful carnations, what bloodred roses shed for love of you, my God !"[18]. They asked Mary, as did Giordano Ansalone, to enable them to recover their health, so that they could die only as victims for Christ[19].

I entrust all this to Mary, who, with her rosary, helped our martyrs to imitate and to proclaim her Son ; to be intrepid guardians of his word, like the courageous women Magdalena of Nagasaki and Marina of Omura. I entrust the destiny of the Philippines and of all Asia to Mary, Queen of the Rosary, who with the title of "La Naval" is venerated as the guardian of freedom for the Catholic faith.

10. This is the *full meaning of this beatification* : to animate all the Christians of the Far East and to

spread the word of the Lord[20]. In a special way I say this to you Filipinos, who form the only predominantly Catholic nation in the eastern part of the continent of Asia. It is an invitation that I also extend to the other Christians of the nearby lands that border the Pacific Ocean like a symbol of the search for God described by Saint Catherine of Siena : "A deep sea, in which the further I enter it the more I find ; and the more I find the more I look for you. You are insatiable, for as the soul becomes satiated in your abyss, it is not satiated, because it always remains hungry for you, thirsty for you, desiring to see you by the light of your light"[21].

Dearly beloved : amidst the efforts needed for our own Christian lives, and for spreading the light of Christ throughout Asia and the whole world, let us look today to these zealous martyrs who give us deep assurance and fresh hope when they tell us : "In all this we are more than conquerors because of him who has loved us"[22]. And this is the mystery we celebrate today : the love of Jesus Christ, who is the light of the world. Amen.

[1] Cf. *Mt* 10:32.

[2] Cf. *Positio super Martyrio*, Rome 1979, pp. 478-9.

[3] *1 Jn* 5:4.

[4] Cf. *Adversus Haereses*, Book 1, 10, 1-3; *PG* 7, 550-554.

[5] Cf. *Rev* 5:9-10.

[6] Cf. *S. Th.* II-II, q. 124, a. 3.

[7] Cf. *Jn* 3:16.

[8] Cf. *Positio*, pp. 47.

[9] Cf. *Catechesi Tradendae*, 5-6.

[10] Cf. *Jn* 10:10.

[11] Cf. *Acts* 9:15.

[12] Cf. *Positio*, pp. 412-414.

[13] Cf. *Sapientia Christiana*: AAS 71 (1979), p.478.

[14] Cf. *Sapientia Christiana*, *loc. cit.*, p. 479.

[15] Cf. *Alianza Intima entre la Religión y la Educación*, 19 April 1987.

[16] Cf. *Lk 22:32*.

[17] *Acts 1:8*.

[18] Cf. *Positio*, p.446.

[19] Cf. *Positio*, p.298.

[20] Cf. *2 Thess 3:1*.

[21] *Dialogue*, Chapter 167.

[22] *Rom 8:37*.

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