



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO KOREA, PAPUA NEW GUINEA,
SOLOMON ISLANDS AND THAILAND

(MAY 2-11, 1984) **MASS AT THE MAJOR SEMINARY OF SEOUL** *HOMILY OF POPE JOHN PAUL II* *Seoul*
Thursday, 3 May 1984

Praised be Jesus Christ!

1. In his first Letter to the Corinthians, Saint Paul *bears witness to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ*. He says: "Christ died for our sins . . . he was buried . . . he was raised on the third day". The basis of his testimony is the fact that the Risen Lord appeared to the Apostles and disciples and finally to Paul himself (*1 Cor. 15, 3-4*). It is this central mystery of the faith, the Paschal Mystery, the mystery of the death and Resurrection of Christ, which that great Apostle and missionary proclaimed to the Christians in Corinth and to everyone he met.

Like Saint Paul, I have come to Korea today *to bear witness to the Resurrection of Christ*. I have come to speak to all who have received the Gospel and who hold fast to it, to all who firmly believe that the Gospel is the way to salvation. I have also come to proclaim the crucified and risen Jesus to all who freely choose to listen to my voice. But you, dear seminarians, you, together with your Bishops and superiors, are the very *first ones* in Korea with whom I share the Church's Alleluia of Easter joy, proclaiming the Lord's victory over sin and death. You are the first ones with whom I share the joy of the Paschal Mystery by celebrating the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. And so it should be, for you are in a very real sense the future and hope of the Church in this beloved land.

2. Already in the 1820s, efforts were begun by lay people to foster vocations to the priesthood. Despite a raging persecution, *your holy ancestors* spontaneously formed the Angels' Sodality, to foster, pray for, and support vocations. And it was from such fervent communities of Christian life that the first Korean priests came: Father Andrew Kim Taegon, who is venerated in this chapel, and Father Thomas Choe Yang'up.

Even as seminarians, younger than most of you here present, those first priests of Korea showed a zeal for study and a hunger for wisdom, together with strong faith, willing obedience and

persevering hope. In these ways, but above all by their readiness to die for Christ and the Gospel, they shine forth as great and lasting examples for all of you.

Ten years after Father Kim's martyrdom, the first seminary in Korea was founded in Paeron in 1855. Then, after untold efforts and sacrifices at Puhunggol, Yongsan, Taegu, and Togwon in the North, the regional major seminaries of Seoul and Kwangju were eventually established. I am pleased that last year a seminary was begun at Taegu, and at Suwon another has been opened this year to commemorate my coming to Korea.

Nine hundred strong, dear brothers in Christ, you are *a consolation and great promise for the Church*. The Church looks to you with much expectation and hope, and she asks you to grow ever stronger in your faith in Christ by imitating the example of Father Kim and Father Choe and the many others who have given their lives in the service of the Gospel.

3. This time of preparation for the priesthood should help each of you to strengthen the conviction that Jesus Christ is "*the way and the truth and the life*" (Jo. 14, 16). He is the way to the Father. Jesus himself lives for the Father in his total dedication to the Father's will, by accomplishing the work of the Redemption of the world. And he leads us to the Father as well.

In the seminary, while preparing for the priesthood, you must strive to penetrate the mystery of Christ. You must seek an ever deeper understanding of *the union that Christ has with the Father precisely because he is the Son*. In today's Gospel he tells us: "I am in the Father and the Father is in me" (*Ibid.* 14, 10. 11). It is because of this union with the Father that he can say to Philip: "He who has seen me has seen the Father" (*Ibid.* 14, 9). Each of you, dear seminarians, must understand this mystery of Jesus Christ. You must grasp this mystery in such a way that it becomes for you interior truth, truth in your very heart. You must grasp the mystery in such a way that the mystery can take possession of your whole being.

By pondering the mystery of Christ, you come *to understand the priesthood* and develop a priestly attitude. Seek to put on the mind and heart of Jesus Christ. Remember that the crucified and risen Savior wishes you one day to celebrate the Eucharist: the sacrament of his own Sacrifice for the salvation of the world. This Sacrifice has its eternal and unending beginning in the union of the Son with the Father, of which today's Gospel speaks. The Sacrifice of the Mass, which is the center of your priesthood, remains forever the Sacrifice of the Son of God, who became man in order to lead us to the Father.

4. I wish to draw the attention of the Church in Korea to the importance of making intense efforts to foster vocations and to provide the best possible priestly formation in the seminaries. An abundance of vocations and an effective seminary training: these are *proofs of the vitality of the Church*. They are signs that the Cross and Resurrection of Christ, through the action of the Holy Spirit, are bringing forth precious fruits in the Church in Korea.

In your efforts to foster vocations, which God in his merciful providence is furnishing in abundance, let your first practice be *frequent prayer* for this intention. Pray with confidence to the Lord of the harvest, remembering the promise of Jesus which we have heard again today: "Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it" (*Io.* 14, 13).

Let me add a special word to those responsible for the formation of these young men. Dear brothers in Christ, never doubt how highly the Church esteems you and the work you do, so vitally important for the future. As I assure you of the support of my prayers, I also exhort you to convey not only knowledge of Christ and his Church but Christ himself. Christ must be communicated through the purity and power of the word of God. Inspire *a deep love for the person of Jesus*. May the example of your personal lives render him present. May your words and deeds be a sign of how deeply you believe that Jesus Christ is "the way and the truth and the life" (*Ibid.* 14, 6).

Dear brothers in Christ: the priesthood is born of God's love. It means everything for the Church in Korea. Let us *praise God* for this great gift and for the young men who will transmit it to the future generations in this land through Christ our Lord. Amen.