



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE BISHOPS OF THAILAND
ON THEIR "AD LIMINA" VISIT***

Thursday, 27 November 1980

Venerable and dear Brother Bishops from Thailand,

1. The most important aspect of our meeting today is *the love that unites* us in the expression of the love that in the service of his Gospel. This love is at the basis of our *collegialitas affectiva*; it is also this love which helps us to persevere in our task of fulfilling ever more perfectly the *collegialitas effectiva* to which the Lord is constantly calling us.

You have come also with the expression of the love that your people have for me as the Pastor and servant of the universal Church. I am deeply grateful, and on this occasion I offer to all of you the full measure of my own love in Christ Jesus our Lord.

It is indeed a pleasure for me to greet you today as the Bishops of a great people with three centuries of Christian experience, in whose midst the word of God took root as in good soil^[1]; this same word of God continues to this day to be for you a source of strength and a cause of joy.

2. With particular satisfaction I have noted your commitment *to the promotion of ecclesial unity*.

This commitment is demonstrated in your different activities and programmes aimed at fostering the solidarity, collaboration and shared responsibility that should characterize all those who are one family in Christ, and are called to be his witnesses "to the ends of the earth"^[2]. Every effort to maintain and nourish Catholic unity is important above all because it is directed to the manifestation of the unity of the Most Holy Trinity, which is the supreme revelation of God. As Christ's disciples we are called to be one even as he is one with his Eternal Father. The credibility, moreover, of Christ's mission before the world is forever linked with the unity of his Church^[3].

3. Your pastoral solicitude rightfully spurs you on to devote attention to the building up of various *Christian communities*, in which your people can find an effective support for their faith. These communities by their nature are based on the word of God, which becomes the criterion for all the action of redeemed humanity. Each community must be aware of a new birth, which, in the words of Saint Peter, takes place “through the living and abiding word of God”[4]. Each nucleus of God’s people regenerated by water and the Holy Spirit is called to give glory, by the witness of good works, to the Father in heaven[5]. Each community is called to be a community of prayer and thanksgiving; and each community finds its complete fulfilment in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, to which all Christian living is oriented.

4. For this reason, everything you do as Bishops *to promote vocations* to the priesthood is of vital importance for all your people. It is especially necessary that all the seminarians be trained in a deep understanding of the nature of the Church, which is meant to spread the light of Christ and to be “a sign and instrument of intimate union with God and of the unity of the whole human race”[6]. Be assured of my special prayers for your national Seminary, “Lux Mundi”, that it will always worthily fulfil its lofty mission of evangelization. It gives me, moreover, great joy to know that vocations both to the priesthood and to religious life are increasing in your praise. This fact summons us to accept the Psalmist’s invitation: “Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise in the assembly of the faithful”[7].

5. My fraternal encouragement goes likewise to you in your endeavours to promote *the participation of the laity in the Church’s mission of salvation*. I am confident that a realization by the laity of their distinctive and indispensable role will bear ever greater fruits in the years to come. At the same time may the laity be ever more aware of their sacramental configuration to Jesus Christ and of their personal vocation to holiness within the community of an evangelizing and catechizing Church. The whole Body of the universal Church is in solidarity within the Church in Thailand in the arduous tasks of bringing the Gospel into the lives of children, young people and adults. And the whole Church is at one with you as you proclaim for your people the aim of all Catholic education, which Saint Paul succinctly summarizes as: *donec formetur Christus in vobis*[8].

May the Lord sustain all the generous priests and men and women religious, both Thai and those who have come from abroad, who, together with their brothers and sisters in the laity, strive in times of joy and sorrow, hope and disappointment, to be faithful to the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.

6. Among the many good works of Christian witness and loving service that bring honour to the whole community of your people are those exercised for the benefit of the *refugees*, as well as for those persons whose lives are deeply touched by the refugee problem. The reward Christ promised for good deeds done to the hungry and the thirsty, to strangers and to all in need is nothing less than eternal life[9].

May this assurance encourage you to continue to minister to those in need in this present hour, providing as much material and spiritual help as you can with the help offered by Catholics of the whole world through the various charitable organizations. I ask the Lord Jesus to show himself once again in this generation, through your programmes of pastoral assistance, to be the Good Shepherd of all humanity. Through the charitable activity of your people may Christ's Church be newly manifested as a symbol of hope and a sign of mercy. And may Mary, the Mother of mercy and of fair love, intercede for all who show mercy or receive mercy, for all who clothe themselves or are clothed with compassion and kindness^[10].

7. On this occasion I wish to express my best wishes for the authorities of your country and for all your *non-Christian brethren*. In particular I send my respectful greetings to your Buddhist fellow-citizens. The cordial relations that you endeavour to maintain with them are truly in conformity with the Second Vatican Council, which presents to us the Church's exhortation that her sons and daughters "prudently and lovingly, through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, and in witness of Christian faith and life, acknowledge, preserve and promote the spiritual and moral as well as social and cultural goods found among those people"^[11].

This exhortation is indeed normative for the whole Church, but it has special meaning for the Church in Thailand, which seeks to be faithful to Christ by being a herald of his Gospel and a servant of all his brothers and sisters.

8. Dear Brothers, the advice given in the Letter to the Hebrews has a deep meaning for us in all our activities on behalf of the Gospel: "Let us not lose sight of Jesus who leads us in our faith and brings it to perfection"^[12]. With all our might we believe in the power of the Paschal Mystery, in the saving grace of Christ, who is able to sustain his Church until he comes in glory to present us to his Father. In the love of Christ, I ask you to take this message of hope to all who make up your local Churches, "to all who love us in the faith"^[13].

Praised be Jesus Christ!

[1] Cfr. *Matth.* 13, 23.

[2] *Act.* 1, 8.

[3] Cfr. *Io.* 17, 21 ss.

[4] *1 Petr.* 1, 23.

[5] Cfr. *Matth.* 5, 17.

[6] *Lumen Gentium*, 1.

[7] *Ps. 149*, 1.

[8] *Gal. 4*, 19.

[9] Cfr. *Matth. 25*, 31 ss.

[10] Cfr. *Col. 3*, 12.

[11] *Nostra Aetate*, 2.

[12] *Hebr. 12*, 2.

[13] *Tit. 3*, 15.

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