



The Holy See

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

Friday, 10 October 1980

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate,

It is a great joy for me, as Successor of Peter in the See of Rome, to welcome you my brother Bishops from Burma, and to embrace you in the charity of Jesus Christ, the Eternal and Incarnate Word of God.

1. On this ad limina visit of yours, you come as *the Ordinaries of four local Churches*: Mandalay, Myitkyina, Bassein and Kengtung. You come likewise *as representatives of all the Bishops of Burma* serving the entire Catholic people throughout your land. I greet you therefore with great respect and friendship, with deep esteem and love. I greet you as collaborators in the Gospel, as Bishops of the Church of God, who are united with me and all the members of the Episcopal College in the bonds of faith and charity, and who are called to exercise together - according to each one's role - responsibility for the universal Church.
2. I greet you as the *spiritual heirs of authentic and generous missionaries*, who worked patiently and perseveringly so that the Gospel would become incarnate in the culture of your people and transform their lives by its own ennobling originality. In you the Church authenticates the labours of the missionaries, renders homage to their sacrifices, and perpetuates their memory. I greet you as spiritual leaders of the faithful, many of whom have demonstrated and exercised heroism in the Catholic faith, thus giving a splendid witness to Jesus Christ and his Gospel.
3. This is truly an *hour of thanksgiving*. Together we express our gratitude to the Most Holy Trinity for the blessings bestowed upon your people, for the graces that have touched their lives. Through Jesus Christ we give thanks that the word of God took root in the hearts of your ancestors and

brought forth fruits of justice and holiness of life in generation after generation. We give thanks for the great gift of perseverance that has characterized the lives of so many individuals and communities.

We praise the power of the Paschal Mystery which could alone guarantee fidelity to Christ and his Church, which has been and remains an unquestioned reality in your Christian experience. Despite difficulties of various kinds, despite obstacles from various sources, despite the unchanging exigencies of the Gospel - before which human nature instinctively recoils in every age - the grace of Jesus Christ has repeatedly conquered human hearts and sustained the efforts of so many of the faithful who zealously endeavour to put on Christ and follow in his footsteps.

Through the action of the Holy Spirit, Christ's death and Resurrection have effected *growth* among your people: *young people* have responded to vocations to the priesthood and religious life; many of the *laity* have understood their Christian dignity and enthusiastically embraced their mission; *catechists* have helped to make the Church ever more an evangelised and evangelising community.

All of this, venerable Brothers, is owing to the grace of Christ, who in each age must be recognized and proclaimed as the Redeemer of man and the Saviour of the world.

4. Our meeting is likewise an *hour of renewal*. At the tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul we are challenged to rededicate ourselves *to the Gospel* and to its integral and faithful proclamation. We are called in our own lives to embrace anew the word of God with all its demands, and to propose it confidently and consistently to our people in the name of him who was known as a "sign of contradiction"^[1] and who once said: "The gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life"^[2].

Our is also a rededication to *the pastoral office* which we exercise in the name of the Good Shepherd. As Bishops we are called to make visible and attractive in ourselves the selfless, sacrificing and compassionate love of Jesus for his people. Only in intimacy with Jesus will we find the inner force to persevere in genuine concern for all our brothers and sisters. Only through holiness of life will we be relevant ministers and representatives of a loving Christ.

5. This is an hour of thanksgiving and renewal; it is also *an hour of hope!*

Because the Spirit of God has been poured out in our hearts and because the final destiny of the Church is in the hands of Jesus, we are sustained by a great hope. Our hope is that each community of the faithful in Burma, gathered together in the power of God's word and made strong by Christ's sacraments, may ever more effectively fulfil its evangelising mission and serve the cause of human advancement. In brief, that all the faithful will relate to their neighbours as Jesus did to his, as Jesus wants us to do to ours. Dear Brothers, the words of Saint Paul confirm us in our hope today: "For to this end we toil and strive, because we have set our hope on the living

God”[3].

And from this gift of hope implanted in your hearts may there spring up, in each one of you and in your brother Bishops at home, *a new trust in Christ, a new assuredness in your pastoral ministry* - a trust and assuredness that are alien to every form of human complacency, but which derive from confidence in Christ and his word, and are strong in the promise of Jesus, who says: “Ecce ego vobiscum sum”[4].

6. In this spirit of thanksgiving and renewal, with this fresh hope and trust, I ask you to take my greetings to all the beloved faithful of Burma. To the clergy, to the men and women religious, to the seminarians and catechists, and to all who make up the ranks of the Catholic laity I send my Apostolic Blessing, with the assurance of my prayers, especially for the sick and suffering, for those afflicted by loneliness and sorrow. And to all your non-Christian brethren, particularly to the members of the Buddhist communities, with whom you are called to live and work together, as well as to the authorities of the State I offer my cordial and respectful greetings.

And to you, my dear Brothers in the Episcopate: “Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord”[5].

[1] *Luc.* 2, 34.

[2] *Matth.* 7, 14.

[3] *1 Tim.* 4, 10.

[4] *Matth.* 28, 20.

[5] *1 Tim.* 1, 2.