



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO KOREA, PAPUA NEW GUINEA,
SOLOMON ISLANDS AND THAILAND **ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II**
TO CLERGY, RELIGIOUS PEOPLE AND LAITY *Cathedral of Port Moresby (Papua New Guinea)*
Tuesday, 8 May 1984

Beloved faithful People of Port Moresby and Papua New Guinea,

1. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, "died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised" (2 Cor. 5, 15).

My brothers and sisters in Christ, the redemption of the world was accomplished by the Passion, death and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Before the Redemption, mankind was enslaved by sin, inclined to dominate rather than serve, living for self and not for others. But by the mystery of his Cross and Resurrection, we have been given *the freedom and grace to live no longer for ourselves but for him*. What a wonderful gift from Christ, our Saviour!

It was precisely for this reason that *Christ died* for all of us, to liberate us from the bond of selfishness from which by ourselves we could never escape, *to make us free*, and to enable us to live for him. This is the gift which Christ won for all of us: clergy, religious, laity. It is the gift which the missionaries brought to Papua New Guinea, which they carried in their own hearts and which they put into practice in this land. I think of the example of *Blessed Giovanni Mazzucconi*, who gave his life for love of Christ. His martyrdom is an eloquent proclamation of the teaching of Jesus which we have heard in today's Gospel: "Whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple" (*Luc. 14, 33*).

2. Through the living waters of Baptism, all of us have received the grace of living for Christ. Thus we have been made sharers in the work which he himself came to accomplish, namely, to reconcile the world to God. As we have heard in today's first reading: "*God . . . through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation*" (2 Cor. 5, 18).

All members of the Church share in the "ministry of reconciliation", but each according to the gifts that he or she has received.

3. The *laity*, by their daily witness to Christ at home, at work and in all the ordinary circumstances of the world, wrestle

against the hostility and divisions which still exist in a society marked by sin, and *seek to build a Kingdom* of truth and justice, the Kingdom of the living God - a Kingdom of love and peace.

Married couples make an important contribution to the unity and stability of society by remaining faithful to their promises of lifelong fidelity and by bearing witness to the generous love of Christ for his Spouse, the Church. And *the Christian family*, united in faith and prayer, is like *a school where the lessons of forgiveness*, patience and love for one another are learned. In the family, children are prepared to take their part in the life and mission of the Church.

Lay leaders and catechists also serve as "ambassadors for Christ", seeking to promote harmony and peace. Here in Papua New Guinea, your apostolic efforts have been vitally needed to hand on the message of the Gospel to your brothers and sisters. And therefore I wish to commend you for your generosity and fidelity and for the way you work in close collaboration with the clergy and religious.

4. *Men and women religious*, by their religious consecration, play a special role in the Church's ministry of reconciliation. In their desire to love Christ with an undivided heart (Cf. *Cor. 7, 35*), they *bear public witness to the Gospel of Redemption and reconciliation*. That is why it is so important for each community of religious to be united among themselves, to be "of one heart and soul" (*Act. 4, 32*). Dear Religious: this lived unity among yourselves, which underlies your public witness to the Gospel, is strengthened by your common life and prayer and by your sacred vows, especially the vow of obedience. Always remember that sin and division first entered the world "by one man's disobedience", but reconciliation was restored "by one man's obedience" (*Rom. 5, 19*), *the obedience of Jesus*. Therefore when you imitate Christ through the obedience you give to him and to the Church through your religious superiors, you are contributing to the Church's ministry of reconciliation. As I stated in my recent Apostolic Exhortation to Men and Women Religious: "It can therefore be said that those who decide to live according to the counsel of obedience are placed in a unique way between *the mystery of sin* and the mystery of *justification and salvific grace* . . . Precisely by means of the vow of obedience they decide *to be transformed* into the likeness of Christ, who 'redeemed humanity and made it holy by his obedience'. In the counsel of obedience they desire to find their own role in the Redemption of Christ and their own way of sanctification" (Ioannis Pauli PP. II, *Redemptionis Donum*, 13).

5. And now, I would like to say a word to *my brother priests*. The words of Saint Paul in the first reading this afternoon have a special meaning for us who share in the ordained ministry. The Apostle says, "In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself ... and *entrusting to us the message of reconciliation*" (*2 Cor. 5, 19*). As men chosen to proclaim the word of God, as priests strengthened for this noble task by the Sacrament of Holy Orders, we must place our whole lives at the service of the word, letting Christ make "his appeal through us ... be reconciled to God" (*Ibid. 5, 20*).

Working in *hierarchical communion* with the local Bishop, priests strive to build up the unity of the local Christian community, and to cultivate a fraternal spirit which embraces not only the local Church but the universal Church as well. Because the service of unity is so vital in today's world, it is even more urgent that priests themselves should never create division through their activities, but rather should strive to unite the community by offering to the faithful the word of God.

Above all, dear brothers, you must foster reconciliation in the Church and in the world through your attentive ministry of

the *Sacrament of Penance* and the *celebration of the Eucharist*. Never doubt the great value of the time you spend hearing Confessions. It is a time when, in a unique way, you represent the merciful Redeemer who rejoices in the conversion of sinners. And also remember the words of the Second Vatican Council: "No Christian community can be built up unless it has its basis and centre in the celebration of the most Holy Eucharist" (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 6).

6. In the Gospel passage this evening we heard Jesus speak of someone "desiring to build a tower" (*Luc. 14, 28*). He warned of the importance of carefully calculating the cost before deciding to build; otherwise people would begin to mock the builder saying, "This man began to build, and was not able to finish" (*Ibid. 14, 30*).

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, we too desire to build something in union with Jesus our Redeemer. We desire *to build the Kingdom* of the living God. In our desire, let us not forget to *calculate the cost*, the cost of building the Kingdom, the cost of discipleship. For Jesus warned us: "Whoever does not bear his own Cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple" (*Luc. 14, 27*).

In order to live for Christ and no longer for ourselves, to collaborate in the ministry of reconciliation, to build the Kingdom of God, *we must bear the Cross* and follow Jesus. Let us not be afraid to be signs of contradiction. Let us embrace the Cross, confident that it is a "tree of eternal life", trusting in the firm promise of the Resurrection.

Together with the Virgin Mary and all the Saints, let us build God's Kingdom here on earth, so as to be able to live for ever with the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.