



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT TO SINGAPORE

***ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
AT THE MEETING WITH THE PRIESTS***

20 November 1986

Dear Brothers in Christ,

1. I greet with joy in our Risen Saviour the priests of Singapore and Malaysia. I am very pleased to be with you today during this Pastoral Visit to Singapore. I have heard of your zeal for evangelization and of your loyalty and love for the Church. The local Churches which you serve are young and expanding, and you have a real missionary spirit.

It is only right that I should feel close to you and remember you in prayer each day. For we priests are united in brotherhood, a sacramental brotherhood. We share in the one priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Whether we find ourselves serving Christ in our own native land or ministering to God's people in another country, each of us can rejoice at having been called by name and sent to proclaim the Good News.

By his ordination, a priest is set apart in the midst of the People of God, not for the sake of personal honour or special privilege, but for the sake of Gospel service. It is our task to help people grow in God's love and life. Through the ministry of word and sacrament, we try to develop in them a thirst for eternity, a hunger for truth and goodness, a longing for God.

This is what unites us as brothers: the vocation of priesthood in a Church which is by nature missionary.

2. As you know, dear brothers, on Holy Thursday every year I address a letter to all the priests of the world. This is one of the ways in which I try to offer you encouragement and support. It is also one of the ways in which I fulfil my apostolic mission of confirming my brothers in the faith. I choose Holy Thursday because it is good for us to go back to the Upper Room.

To serve with joy and hope in our priestly ministry, we must regularly return to the Upper Room, the place where Jesus first gave us the Eucharist and where the priesthood was born. There we enter more deeply into the mystery of the "living bread" and the "cup of eternal salvation". In a spirit of adoration, we grow in gratitude for the blessed Eucharist which, as the Second Vatican Council said, "contains the Church's entire spiritual wealth, that is, Christ himself, our Passover and living bread".

It is good for us to go often to the Upper Room and listen as Jesus says to us, as he said to the Apostles at the Last Supper: "No longer do I call you servants... but I have called you friends". These words were spoken within the context of the institution of the Eucharist and the ministerial priesthood. Can there be any doubt, then, that Jesus wishes to be very close to each of his priests? To be a priest is to be a servant of others, a minister of the mysteries of God. But far more profoundly, to be a priest is to enjoy special friendship with the Redeemer of the world, the Lamb of Sacrifice.

3. We go back to the Upper Room in order to go forward to the New Jerusalem, to go forward in faithful service, rekindled in love for Christ, eager to build up God's Kingdom through prayer and the proclamation of the Gospel. Through the Liturgy of the Hours the course of each day is sanctified. By preaching the word of God with deep conviction, we help the faithful to take their proper part in the mission of the Church. In the faithful administration of the Sacraments we fulfil our priesthood, particularly by encouraging the faithful to confess their sins in the Sacrament of Penance, so as to receive Christ's mercy and strength. Our own example in this regard is very important. Above all, in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, we render glory and praise to God and hasten the coming of his Kingdom.

It is in the Upper Room that Jesus promised to send us the Holy Spirit, the Counsellor and Guide, the Spirit of truth and love. In the Holy Spirit, we find the strength to carry on "the work" which the Father first gave to Christ and which continues today in the Church.

How important it is, dear brothers, that we should never lose sight of the mystery of the Redemption. For our task is to help our people to lift their eyes above the pain and toil of earthly life, to look beyond the world's alluring false promises, to the bright and authentic promises of the Redeemer of the world. Our lives as priests are caught up in the life of Christ and guided by God's loving providence. If we stay close to the Lord Jesus, if we remain open to the voice of the Holy Spirit in the Church, we shall find the grace to be always faithful and always joyful in the Lord.

Dear brothers: I entrust you all to Mary, the Mother of Jesus the High Priest. May your lives and ministry be enriched by her protection and her love!

