



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY

TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND CANADA

VISIT TO THE CATHEDRAL OF SAINTS SIMON AND JUDE

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

Phoenix

Monday, 14 September 1987

Dear Bishop O'Brien,

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

1. It is a joy for me to come to *the Cathedral of Saints Simon and Jude*, and to be with you who make up this local Church in Phoenix. This house of prayer and worship, this mother church of the diocese, is named after two of the twelve Apostles, two men of courageous faith who personally received from our Risen Saviour the mandate to preach the Gospel to the ends of the earth. Jesus said to them and the rest of the twelve: "*Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to carry out everything I have commanded you*" (*Matth. 28, 19-20*).

Simon and Jude responded wholeheartedly to this summons and spent the rest of their lives seeking "to open up for all people a free and sure path to full participation in the mystery of Christ" (*Ad Gentes, 5*).

The Church, built as she is on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets (Cfr. *Eph. 2, 20*), has inherited the same mission that Jesus first entrusted to the Twelve. *The Church is by her very nature missionary*, "for it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she takes her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father" (*Ad Gentes, 2*). She has the honour and privilege, and also the obligation, of bringing the Good News of salvation to all nations, to every person. As the bishops of the United States stated last November in their Pastoral

Statement on World Mission: "We are faithful to the nature of the Church to the degree that we love and sincerely promote her missionary activity" (*To the Ends of the Earth*, 2).

2. *The Church in Phoenix*, like every other local Church in the world, is *the fruit of evangelization*. The Gospel was first brought to Arizona three hundred years ago by the renowned Jesuit missionary, *Father Eusebio Kino*, also known as the "Apostle of Sonora and Arizona". At great personal sacrifice, Father Kino worked tirelessly to establish missions throughout this area so that the Good News concerning our Lord Jesus Christ might take root among the people living here.

And the Gospel did take root, and numerous other missionaries came after Father Kino to continue the evangelizing effort. Perhaps the most zealous among these was the Franciscan, *Francisco Garces*. With particular love for the Indian people, he sought to present the Gospel to them in a way adapted to their culture; at the same time he also encouraged them to live in harmony and peace among themselves. So completely was his life patterned on that of our Lord, that he ended his labours here by shedding his blood for the Gospel.

The missionary efforts continued down through the years, and the Church became firmly established in Arizona. *The rich fruit of this evangelization* is clearly evident today in this quickly growing Diocese of Phoenix and in the expanding dioceses of the surrounding area. The Gospel has truly taken root here and has brought forth fruit in abundance.

3. And yet, the work of evangelization is *not over*. On earth it will never be over. Indeed, so much remains to be done. Let us not forget the words of the Second Vatican Council which said that missionary activity is "a supremely great and sacred task of the Church" (*Ad Gentes*, 29). The duty of carrying forward this work rests on the whole Church and on every member of the Church.

The Church, at the close of the twentieth century, has *need of many more missionaries* with the zeal of Father Kino and Father Garces, persons of heroic faith like *Saint Isaac Jogues*, *Saint John Neumann* and *Saint Frances Cabrini*, who are willing to leave their own homeland to bring the message of salvation to people in other lands, especially to those who have never heard the word of God.

Who will meet this need? The Gospel message has still not been heard by two-thirds of the world's population. Who will respond to God's missionary call at the end of the twentieth century? Jesus says: "Whoever loves father or mother, son or daughter more than me is not *worthy of me*" (*Matth. 10, 37*). We must be *worthy of Christ*.

Not everyone is asked to leave home and loved ones for this task, but *all are called* to bear the burden, to do their part. As the American bishops have said so well: "Jesus' great commission to the first disciples is now addressed to us... This mission to the people of all nations must involve all of us personally in our parishes and at the diocesan and universal levels of the Church" (*To the*

Ends of the Earth, 3).

Missionaries in foreign countries deserve our prayerful support and material help. American Catholics have been especially generous in the past, a generosity and interest that show your genuine missionary spirit. The practice of "twinning" between American parishes and dioceses and those of Africa and Asia has been of great benefit. With gratitude I commend you, and in the name of the universal Church I ask your continued help and prayers. Great assistance has been given to the missions by mission aid societies such as the Society for the Propagation of the Faith and the Association of the Holy Childhood. Nor can we ever forget the generous missionary work that has been carried out for decades by religious institutes and missionary societies of the United States, and also by generous *Fidei Donum* priests and by lay missionaries. The reward of those who have sacrificed everything to spread the Gospel will be great in heaven

4. Dear brothers and sisters: the Letter to the Hebrews tells us that God the Father considered it fitting to make Christ, our leader in the work of salvation, " *perfect through suffering*" (*Hebr. 2, 10*). In a similar way, he led the Apostles Simon and Jude through the suffering of martyrdom to perfection in eternity. In every age of the Church, God makes his chosen ones "perfect through suffering", bringing them to the fullness of life and happiness by giving them on earth a share in the Cross of Christ.

It is easy to understand that God's plan for us passes along the way of the holy Cross, because it was so for Jesus and his apostles. Brothers and sisters: never be surprised to find yourselves passing under the shadow of the Cross. *Christian life finds its whole meaning in love, but love does not exist for us without effort, discipline and sacrifice* in every aspect of our life. We are willing to give in proportion as we love, and when love is perfect the sacrifice is complete. God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, and the Son so loved us that he gave his life for our salvation.

On this day when Catholics around the world celebrate the Triumph of the Cross, the Church invites us to look once again at the meaning of our Christian discipleship, to understand the sacrifices it involves, and *place all our hope in our crucified and Risen Saviour*.

O triumphant Cross of Christ,
inspire us to continue the task of evangelization!
O glorious Cross of Christ,
strengthen us to proclaim
and live the Gospel of salvation!
O victorious Cross of Christ,
our only hope,
lead us to the joy and peace
of the Resurrection and eternal life!

Amen.

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