



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO THE FAR EAST AND MAURITIUS

MEETING WITH THE BISHOPS OF THE EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE OF INDONESIA

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

Apostolic Nunciature, Jakarta
Friday, 13 October 1989

Dear Brother Bishops,

1. As my pastoral visit comes to an end, I cannot fail to thank you, the pastors of the Church in Indonesia, for your dedicated service to the Catholic community in this vast archipelago. Truly, *the Lord has done "great things"* (Cfr. *Luc. 1, 49*) here, thanks to the ministry of shepherds like yourselves who have preached the Gospel "not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God" (*1Thess. 2, 13*).

I have come to you as a brother bearing the greetings and fraternal love of the Church in Rome. I have also come as the Successor of Peter, of whom *God requires a special solicitude* as pastor of the Church universal. Before I depart I wish to live this moment of collegial communion with you, reflecting on the bishop's calling to be a living sign of the Incarnate Word, and on his personal responsibility for the transmission of the Gospel for the sanctification of God's people to the glory and praise of the Most Holy Trinity.

2. During these last few days I have met many thousands of Indonesian Catholics. At the same time I recognize that they are a minority in relation to the population at large. But as Saint Paul tells us, in order to fulfil his salvific plan *God chooses what is small, vulnerable and seemingly unimportant in the eyes of the world*, "so that no human being might boast in the presence of God"

(1 Cor 1, 29). For it is by God's free and sovereign gift that fallen humanity is restored to divine life through the Death and Resurrection of his Son.

In the service of this plan, the Church's mission here and throughout the world is to be "*a sign and instrument of communion with God and of the unity of the whole humane race*" (*Lumen Gentium*, 1): "*a standard lifted on high for the nations to see*" (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 2); "*a leaven and, as it were, the soul of human society in its renewal by Christ and transformation into the family of God*" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 40).

These and other New Testament images speak to us of a Church whose fruitfulness, at times hidden, is *out of proportion to her number and human resources*. It is a Church whose survival and growth depend not on the will of man but of God, whose mission it is to be bold in preaching the Good News of salvation "in season and out of season" (2Tim. 4, 2).

3. Dear brothers: as bishops you are "heralds" of the Good News of eternal salvation in Christ (Cfr. *Lumen Gentium*, 25). Your ministry as shepherds and teachers is directed both to the members of Christ's flock, who look to you for leadership, inspiration and encouragement, and to society at large. You will want to ensure that the Church *fulfils her mission* not only through the preaching of the Gospel, but also through the Christian witness of all the faithful, so that, as in the case of Nathanael, even the sceptical may be able to "come and see" (Io. 1, 46).

Do not be afraid to encourage the Catholic people to an ever more public witness to the truths and values of their faith, in keeping with their rightful place in the society of which they are worthy citizens. Notwithstanding occasional difficulties, your national Constitution guarantees the full right of Catholics and others to freedom of religion and the practice of their faith.

To "practise the faith" means more than private religious obligation and devotion. One of the great themes of the Second Vatican Council was the call to recognize that the Gospel touches every aspect of life – cultural, economic, social and political. In the words of "*Gaudium et Spes*": "Faith throws a new light on all things and makes known the full ideal which God has set for man, thus guiding the mind towards *solutions that are fully human*" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 11). This does not mean that the Church has concrete solutions to offer for every problem concerning the life of society, but rather she proposes a social teaching that presents *principles for reflection, criteria for judgement as well as directives for action* (Cfr. Congr. pro Doctrina Fidei, *Libertatis Conscientia* 72 ss.).

4. This search for "what is fully human" *under God* constitutes *a point of convergence* for Indonesians of all religions. The Church enters into dialogue and is willing to cooperate with all in mutual respect and good will. But she also stands *firm in her identity and mission*, which are Catholic before all else. Religious diversity within the unity of Indonesia ought not to be feared, least of all by Indonesian Catholics, who as loyal citizens effectively participate in national life as

guaranteed by Pancasila.

Similarly, a proper application of the *principle of religious freedom also benefits the State and society as a whole*, in so far as religion educates citizens to recognize the demands of the moral order and consequently to “govern their activities with a sense of responsibility, and strive after what is true and right, willing always to join with others in cooperative effort” (*Dignitatis Humanae*, 8). Already in many fields of the apostolate and social service there is ample collaboration between the Church and civil institutions, most conspicuously in education and health care. It is to be hoped that such harmony can continue and grow, since it is a vital form of respect for human dignity and fundamental human rights.

A related concern however is the temptation in the world today to reduce the Gospel message to a form of humanitarianism. The Church, however, must always recognize that her essential mission to evangelize has as its “foundation, centre... and summit a clear proclamation that *in Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man*, who died and rose from the dead, salvation is offered to all as a gift of God’s grace and mercy” (Pauli VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 27). This by no means diminishes, but rather heightens the obligation to seek “fully human solutions” and to promote authentic development, but always keeping a proper perspective on the relationship between the “*city of God*” and the “*earthly city*”. The Church’s mission is not restricted to the framework of temporal existence nor completely identified with temporal desires, hopes, affairs and struggles. Rather it is at the service of a *transcendent and eschatological salvation*, which has its beginning in this life but which is fulfilled in eternity (Cfr. *ibid.*).

5. Dear brothers, to you is given by episcopal ordination the great task of continuing the apostolic mission “to preach the Gospel and gather every race and people into a single flock to be guided and governed *in the way of holiness*” (*Pontificale Romanum*, “De ordinatione Episcopi”, Homilia). As successors of the apostles you have the twofold task of preserving the Gospel for future generations in all its fullness and integrity, while also ensuring that it is applied in a dynamic way to the present realities of your local Churches.

The challenge then is to guarantee the presence and vitality of Catholic faith in every aspect of the life of individuals and communities, and within the religious diversity of society itself. This means fostering among the faithful without hesitation or fear an *explicitly Christian understanding of life and work*. It is a question of finding ever new and effective ways for the Gospel to be lived in an *authentically Indonesian manner within the “one, holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church”*.

6. If the Church by her teaching seeks to promote “solutions that are fully human” to the problems and challenges that beset the human family at any given moment in history, it is for the laity, in particular, to “carry out their earthly activity in such a way as to integrate human, domestic, professional, scientific and technical enterprises with religious values... (and) to be witnesses to Christ in all circumstances and at the very heart of the human community” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 43).

It falls to the Church's pastors to inspire and educate the laity as to what the Church offers to society and public life. Truth and justice as measures of freedom, love of neighbour and *the dignity of the person* created in God's image, the principles of subsidiarity and solidarity: these are fundamental to the Catholic contribution to public life and institutions (Cfr. Congr. pro Doctrina Fidei, *Libertatis Conscientia*, 26 et 73). After the example of Christ, Christians must be prepared to bear *prophetic witness* wherever the dignity and rights of persons are threatened or when justice or charity demand it.

You are sometimes painfully aware that certain traditional practices and other contemporary social influences bring about an obscuring of fundamental principles regarding *family life and the responsible transmission of life*. As pastors you know that the very nature of your own personal response to this challenge greatly determines each local Church's vitality in helping Christian couples to fulfil God's plan for their lives. A comprehensive catechetical effort is needed everywhere in the Church to recover an awareness of the primacy of moral values. In "*Familiaris Consortio*" I wrote that the "education of the moral conscience, which makes every human being capable of judging and of discerning the proper ways to achieve self-realization according to his or her original truth,... becomes a pressing requirement that cannot be renounced" (*Familiaris Consortio*, 8).

In order for the laity to fulfil their mission in the world, their pastors must help them to cultivate a *properly formed Christian conscience*, capable of guiding them in all of life's decisions and activities. For in teaching the path to salvation, the Church necessarily refers to the moral order that governs the way people act and relate to one another, with repercussions on every sphere of life. The formation of a Christian conscience, together with the strengthening of moral character and the deepening of spiritual life, is essential for the transformation of the world from within. It is the only sure guarantee of the fruitfulness of inculturation.

7. In speaking to you, I wish to give thanks to God for the life and *ministry of your priests*, diocesan and religious, native and foreign born, who share with you the daily toil of caring for the Church in Indonesia. As those who preside in love over the *presbyterium*, you know how important it is to encourage, sustain and truly love your priests. Following the example of Christ the High Priest, who is able "to sympathize with our weakness, (as) one who was tempted in every way that we are, yet never sinned" (*Hebr.* 4, 15), you will at the same time gently but firmly call them to holiness, to self-abandonment into God's hands, to a life that is humble and close to the poor and most needy. In many ways the priestly vocation is a call to a life marked by the sign of the Cross; indeed it often becomes "a sign of contradiction" (*Luc.* 2, 34). Your closeness to your priests, your openness to them in justice and love, and your prayers for their perseverance will do much to sustain them.

How can we not rejoice together at the increase of vocations to the priesthood and religious life which your particular Churches are experiencing? Here is most certainly a sign of God's loving

providence. In fact, among the many vivid memories that I will take back with me to Rome, one of the most consoling is the sight of the many happy and dedicated priests and men and women religious I have met during my visit here.

At the same time, this gift of the Lord challenges you as bishops to provide those who answer the Lord's call with a spiritual and doctrinal formation that will prepare them for a life of dedication to the service of the Church. As you are well aware, *priests and religious need formation*, not only during their years of preparation in seminaries and religious houses, but throughout their lives. They need to be afforded opportunities of deepening their understanding of the Gospel message *as it is believed and taught by the Church*. I know that you share this concern for their formation, conscious as you are that they in turn are called upon to form others.

8. Dear brothers: in the farewell discourse to the disciples which we find in the Gospel of John, Jesus prays: "(Father), sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth" (*Jo. 17, 17-19*).

These words apply fully to the pastors of the Church. As my visit draws to an end, I express my fervent hope and prayer that the Church, whose existence in Indonesia is one of the "great things" wrought by the power of God, will enjoy the leadership of bishops who are true disciples and apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. May you persevere in the truth and grow in "the holiness of truth" (*Eph. 4, 24*). For it is the truth that makes us free (*Cfr. Jo. 8, 32*), and *the truth is Jesus Christ* (*Cfr. ibid. 14, 6*). To him be glory for ever. Amen.

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