



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II TO THE FILIPINO IMMIGRANTS FROM ALL OVER EUROPE

Saint Peter's Basilica

Saturday, 22 May 1993 My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, I am happy to meet you, *Filipino immigrants from all over Europe*, and to greet you here in Saint Peter's Basilica where all peoples have a spiritual home away from home, at the center of the Church which is truly a loving Mother, and close to the Successor of Peter to whom Christ entrusted the care of the whole People of God. Here in Rome, the Filipino community constitutes the largest community of immigrants. During my Sunday visits to the different parishes in the City I am always happy to meet groups of Filipinos, to see the fervor of your Catholic faith and the joy with which you uphold your traditions. It is a source of satisfaction to know that while many of you are active members of the parishes where you live, there is also a well-organized plan of pastoral care of the Filipino community which can count on the help of many of your own priests and religious, many of whom are present here today. In your homeland it is a fact of life that great numbers of Filipinos continue to emigrate to the four corners of the world. While this points to the persistence of economic and social difficulties in your country, it also bears witness to the profound and tenacious spirit of sacrifice with which you seek solutions to your needs and the needs of your families. As immigrants, in lands not your own, you know how difficult it can be to live and work far from your home and your loved ones. Although you have adapted well to conditions in Europe, and even though your work is highly appreciated, many difficulties remain. I pray that your pilgrimage to Rome will give you a renewed sense of mutual solidarity and a determination to meet with unfailing trust in God the many challenges you face. Chief among these challenges are the grave difficulties which beset family life. *The family is the vital cell of society*, and the health of society depends on the strength and well-being of its families. Yet it is the family which bears the brunt of the harmful effects of immigration. Some of you have left behind your loved ones, and you yearn for them and are sometimes worried about them. Others have families here in Europe, and you wonder how you can pass on to your children in a different cultural environment the strong points of family life as you knew it in the Philippines. I wish to encourage you to take heart, and to commit yourselves to passing on the values of life and love, which are so deeply felt in your own traditions. With the faith which has always sustained the Filipino people in its trials, pray for the wisdom and courage to persevere in goodness and right living! *Remain faithful to the Christian name which your people bears with such great pride!* Your families ought to be true examples of the "domestic Church", an expression first used to describe the Christian family living in the midst of pagans, and which the Second Vatican Council restored to use (Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 11). The concept of the "domestic Church" should apply in a special way to the immigrant family. For, in the situations of diversity, distrust and sometimes even hostility in which immigrants can find themselves, the family is the focal point of human solidarity, and of religious faith and practice. "It is in the bosom of the family", the "Catechism of the Catholic Church" recalls, quoting the

Second Vatican Council, "that parents should, by their word and example, be the first preachers of the faith to their children" (Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 2206). For her part, the Church does not cease to remind the communities in which you find yourselves of their duty to create conditions enabling you and your families to live in dignity, peace and security. I have written about this in my Encyclical "*Laborem Exercens*" on the subject of human work: "Emigration in search of work must in no way become an opportunity for financial or social exploitation.... The value of work should be measured by the same standard and not according to the difference in nationality, religion or race... the *situation of constraint* in which the emigrant may find himself *should not be exploited*" (John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, 23). The Church will continue to teach the demands of social justice and to appeal to the consciences of public authorities and employers to ensure that capital is at the service of labor, and therefore of the people involved, and not labor at the service of capital (Cf. *ibid.*). You have desired to organize this pilgrimage of Filipinos from all over Europe in order to offer your Christian families to God through the intercession of Mary. This pilgrimage, this offering to God, is taking place in the month of May, the month dedicated to Mary under the motto *Isang pananampalataya, isang bansa, isang pamilya... sa patnubay ni Maria* ("one faith, one nation, one family... under the guidance of Mary"). Mary in turn leads us to Jesus, just as she did the servants at the wedding feast of Cana. She tells us to listen to her Son Jesus: "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn. 2: 5). Trust in the maternal love of Mary even when it is difficult to see this love reflected in the hardships of your daily lives. When you encounter prejudice and rejection, turn to Mary. When you are beset by problems of employment and housing, commend your needs to Mary. When you fear for the future of your children, entrust them to Mary, and to the prayers of your first Filipino saint, Lorenzo Ruiz. May the Virgin Mary watch over you and help you to face with courage and fidelity the road of Christian perfection begun at Baptism. With all my heart I bless you, in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May God bless you! May he bless the Philippines!

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