



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE BISHOPS OF THE EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE
OF INDONESIA ON THEIR "AD LIMINA" VISIT**

Friday, 13 September 1996

Dear Brother Bishops,

With heartfelt joy I welcome you—the *second group of Bishops from Indonesia*—who have come on your *ad Limina* visit to re-affirm your faith at the tombs of the Princes of the Apostles, Peter and Paul. I thank God for "the joy and comfort of your love" (Philem. 1:7) and for the bonds of our fraternal communion in the College of Bishops. The pastoral ministry entrusted to the Bishop of Rome is a divine gift which belongs to the full expression of the life of every particular Church. That ministry to the universal Church makes me a servant of her unity in the truth, a service rooted in God's mercy, to be carried out in communion with my Brother Bishops (cf. John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint*, 88-96). Similarly, in *your own Dioceses you are servants and ministers of ecclesial truth and unity*. In the love of the Lord Jesus I wish to encourage you to fulfil that task with all the responsibility and authority which comes to you from your episcopal consecration—an authority which the Gospel distinguishes from worldly power (cf. Mt. 20:25; Mk. 10:42)—so that the People of God in Indonesia may be ever more one body, one spirit in Christ.

2. Your quinquennial reports confirm that we must thank God for the rich harvest of vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life which many of your Churches are experiencing. Sharing with you *an intimate sacramental configuration to Christ the High Priest*, your priests are your principal co-workers in the service of God's people. Indeed, with you they form "an intimate brotherhood, which should naturally and freely manifest itself in mutual aid, spiritual as well as material, pastoral as well as personal" (*Lumen Gentium*, 28). Be for them the living image of the Father; treat them as sons, brothers and friends; pray fervently for them that the Holy Spirit may lead them to the perfect fulfilment of their vocation.

Today more than ever *the integration of the academic, pastoral and spiritual dimensions of priestly formation* is necessary at every level. Formation is not just, or even primarily, a matter of developing pastoral skills but of forming the dispositions—the very heart and mind—of Christ Jesus (cf. Phil. 2:5) in those called to serve the Church in *persona Christi*. As secularism makes inroads sometimes even among those who have answered the Lord's call, the seminary must help candidates to understand that the *priesthood is not a career* which serves personal advancement. Instead, the priest's simplicity and mature responsibility should conform to the attitude of the disciples who left all to follow Christ (cf. Mt. 19:27). I am pleased to learn that your seminaries are striving to implement the directives for priestly formation set forth in the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation "*Pastores Dabo Vobis*". Seminary personnel too should be chosen only from among those who have clearly demonstrated balance and maturity in this regard.

3. During my Pastoral Visit to Indonesia, seven years ago, I drew attention to the essential "*complementarity of roles between clergy and laity*" (John Paul II, *Meeting with the Bishops, Clergy and Men and Women Religious of Indonesia*, 5, [10 Oct. 1989]). Priests should be careful not to usurp the laity's role in the temporal order, while the lay faithful should avoid a kind of "clericalization" which overshadows the specific dignity of the lay state founded on Baptism and Confirmation (cf. John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, 23).

For their part the laity will be "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world" (Mt. 5:13-14) to the extent that provision is made for their *spiritual, doctrinal and moral formation*. Such training should promote personal, family and liturgical prayer, a sense of responsibility for the life and mission of the Church, and knowledge of her teaching. Catholic institutions of higher learning have a particular role to play in helping the laity to know and apply the *rich tradition of Catholic social teaching*—which is itself an effective instrument of evangelization (cf. John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 54)—through courses and public conferences and the media of social communications. I have a vivid recollection of my meeting with the university community on the campus of Atma Jaya University, and renew my esteem and encouragement for all those who are engaged in this noble but difficult vocation.

When the laity receive a solid Christian formation, they are equipped to play a constructive role in the life of the Nation, with a *distinctive motivation, and force*: they see their efforts as a way to fulfil the Lord's command to love our neighbour as ourselves (cf. Mt. 22:39; John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, 42). This is the attitude which inspires support for *Pancasila*, the body of principles which fosters national unity, religious tolerance and justice among all the various communities of your vast: country. Indonesian Catholics, loyal at one and the same time to Christian principles and to the distinctive values of their own culture, and in collaboration with the followers of other religious traditions, will continue to play their part in building a society capable of ensuring that the dignity of all citizens is upheld and respected. They are especially eager to contribute to the integral progress of the Nation when it finds itself in difficult and complex situations. In this respect, we all recall the tragic events which took place recently in Jakarta, bringing concern and suffering to all

those who truly have the good of Indonesia at heart.

While we pray for the victims and all those who in one way or another have been hurt by these sad events, we must hope that everyone will be guided by that deep conviction of which I spoke during my visit to your country: "As your national tradition teaches, the most secure basis for lasting unity and development as a nation is a profound respect for human life, for the inalienable rights of the human person and for the freedom of responsible citizens to determine their destiny as a people" (John Paul II, *Address to the President of the Republic of Indonesia*, 2, [9 Oct. 1989]). Let us pray that the strength of this conviction will grow and that there may be a more widespread willingness to seek, in truth and justice, a peaceful solution of existing tensions.

4. Responding to a changing society, you have increasingly directed your pastoral attention to *family life*, including the traditional model of the extended family—the community of generations—which is still strong in many parts of your country. Especially important is the task of *preparing young people for marriage*, a preparation which should be a veritable "journey of faith , a special opportunity for the engaged to rediscover and deepen the faith received in Baptism" (John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 51). The *good of society requires that the dignity and specific mission of women* be promoted and strengthened so that they can achieve real equality, including "equality of spouses with regard to family rights and the recognition of everything that is part of the rights and duties of citizens" (John Paul II, *Letter to Women*, 4). Throughout the world the Church hopes and prays that women will lead the way in the establishment of a culture of life attuned to the sacredness of the human person.

In fact, a serious challenge to your ministry in relation to the family is the threat posed by *aggressive programmes of population control* rooted in a utilitarian approach to the value of life itself. While the Church acknowledges the right of public authorities "to intervene to orient the demography of the population" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 2372), she insists that all such efforts must "respect the primary and inalienable responsibility of married couples and families", and should exclude the use of methods "which fail to respect the person and fundamental human rights" (John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 91). In the face of birth control campaigns which subject couples to economic or social pressure, robbing them of their dignity and freedom, the Catholic community cannot fail to respond by upholding the truth regarding the intrinsic nature and meaning of conjugal love and by spreading knowledge of *methods of regulating fertility* which correspond to that truth.

These brief remarks on the family would be incomplete without a reference to a challenge which cannot but be dear to your hearts as Pastors: the handing on of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the *youth of Indonesia*. Lead them along the path of "holiness and righteousness" (cf. Lk. 1:75). Teach them to be the evangelizers of their own generation. Listen attentively to their aspirations, their doubts and struggles, as well as their reasoned criticism. Above all, teach them to pray - with pure hearts, lively faith, firm confidence and persevering vigilance.

5. Consecrated men and women, following in the footsteps of the dedicated missionaries who planted the Cross in your Islands, continue to play an *indispensable role* in the mission of evangelization, especially by their prayer of intercession, persevering pursuit of holiness, fraternal life and apostolic zeal. In a country of such diverse ethnic groups, *fraternal life in common should be an eloquent sign of the unity of God's People*, "for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). Especially *in the light of the hallowed traditions of the jubilee year*, consecrated men and women are being challenged to commit themselves ever more generously to serving the poor and the suffering, the abandoned and the marginalized. In ways appropriate to their founding charism Religious Institutes should defend and foster human dignity and rights. This is not an invitation to political or merely humanitarian involvement, but a call to truly evangelical service: to proclaim to the poor, the captive and the oppressed (cf. Lk. 4:18) the Good News that they "dwell in the heart of God" (cf. John Paul II, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, 8) and have a share in the life of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit" (cf. Jn. 17:3).

With respect to Institutes of diocesan right, Bishops should take a personal and caring interest in their overall well-being, by promoting vocations and assuring that candidates are selected only after prudent discernment. The good of the Church requires that every effort be made to see that all Religious, men and women, receive a *human, theological, spiritual and pastoral formation which is thorough and well-integrated*. I can only encourage the growing dialogue and cooperation which is maturing between the Indonesian Bishops' Conference and the Union of Major Religious Superiors. Cordial and candid dialogue manifests true ecclesial charity and serves to build up the communion - which is both hierarchical and charismatic - of the Church of God.

6. Dear Brothers: As the Great Jubilee approaches, we should be convinced that this commemoration of the Redemptive Incarnation "of God who comes in person to speak to man of himself and to show him the path by which he may be reached" (John Paul II, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, 6) must be an occasion of great interior renewal in the Church. The One who was, and is, and is to come (cf. Rev. 4:8) is inviting each individual and community to a *radical conversion of heart*. In the time remaining, the goal of each Pastor in his Diocese, and all together as a Conference, will be to prepare, through intensified prayer, doctrinal formation and works of solidarity, the whole of God's people in Indonesia for the graces of this "year of the Lord's favour" (Is. 61:2). May Mary, Mother of the Redeemer and Mother of the Church, accompany you - and all those in each of your Dioceses whom I greet from my heart - on your journey to meet the Lord who is coming (cf. Rev. 22:20). With my Apostolic Blessing.

©Copyright - Libreria Editrice Vaticana