



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC PILGRIMAGE
OF HIS HOLINESS OF PAUL VI
TO WEST ASIA, OCEANIA AND AUSTRALIA

MASS IN THE CATHEDRAL OF MANILA

HOMILY OF THE HOLY FATHER PAUL VI

Philippines, Manila
Friday, 27 November 1970

Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate,
Dear Sons and Daughters,

We have just arrived on Philippine soil, and We have wanted to make Our first stop here in this Cathedral, to greet you. We thank you for your affectionate and cordial welcome. From the bottom of Our heart We offer you the greeting exchanged by the followers of the same Jesus Christ. It is in his name that We have come among you: it is to glorify and thank him for the wonders accomplished in this part of Asia and in so many other countries of this great continent. It is in order that the Church may pursue with renewed zeal her work of salvation that We have desired to take part in the deliberations of this first general Conference of the bishops of Asia. To God through Jesus Christ be honor for ever and ever (Cfr. *Rom.* 16: 27).

Allow us, dear venerable brothers, to express all the esteem and respect that We have for you and for your heavy tasks. Vast distances often separate you from one another; immense populations demand your pastoral generosity. God grant that this fraternal meeting may strengthen you in the exercise of a divine gift bestowed on you-to watch over and serve the People of God, in power and love (Cfr. *2 Tim.* 1: 7).

You We greet with fatherly affection who are the members of the clergy, diocesan and missionary, and you who are Religious. You also are Our brothers and sisters in the faith common to all of us; you are the special object of God's goodness, which has given you the grace to serve in a special way the saving work of the Church.

A vocation to the priesthood or to practice of the evangelical counsels is in fact a sign of great love by him who has chosen you out from a large number and called you to share his friendship in a special way: «I shall not call you servants any more, said Our Lord», «because a servant does not know his master's business; I call you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have learnt from my Father» (*Jo. 15: 15*). May your hearts be ever filled with gratitude and joy for this precious gift of your vocation!

What a joy it is for the Pope to see you all gathered here in this sacred place of prayer. Our first wish is to render heartfelt homage to the generations of missionaries who, from the first beginnings, have built up this admirable Christian community of the Philippines, of which you, the priests and the Religious of this land, are the finest witness. Coming as you do from varying backgrounds, united in fraternal love in one faith and dedicated to the service of one and the same Master, you have answered love with love. One is not always able to give due recognition to the depth of your sacrifice and to the sometimes heroic perseverance which you must have to live out your lives in the service of others, and most often of the poorest. Nor is it easy to appreciate fully the deep meaning of your lives, for they are not motivated by human interest, but illuminated by faith. «It is not everyone who can accept what I have said, but only those to whom it is granted» (*Matth. 19: 11*), as Our Lord likewise tells us.

We willingly affirm aloud that the priesthood and the religious life are the best signs of the vitality of a Christian community, and its finest treasure; they are the very expression of the life and holiness of the Church (Cfr. *Lumen gentium*, 44).

The task which is yours is often exacting. Even though the world to which you devote yourselves manifests a surprising richness of natural virtues and a remarkable religious spirit, it demands your time, your skill and your heart, without allowing you rest. «The harvest is rich but the laborers are few» (*Matth. 9: 37; Luc. 10: 2*). New situations are arising, particularly with the development of towns, the increasing proportion of young people and the influence of social communications. All these demand that you give your attention to new social groups, adopting certain pastoral and teaching methods. Providentially, the universal Church has the benefit at this time of the rich doctrinal and pastoral documents of the Second Vatican Council. We urge you to draw from them the inspiration for your undertakings, in close communion with your bishops and superiors.

Take courage, dear sons and daughters. It is the Lord who has called you and who sends you out. It is his work that you are doing: «We are God's fellow workers» (Cfr. *1 Cor. 3: 9*) you can say with Saint Paul. Therefore be faithful to Jesus Christ. Nourish your gift of self at the inexhaustible fount which is the Eucharist. The more fervent your union with Christ, the richer will be the life of the Church and the more fruitful its apostolate (Cfr. *Perfectae caritatis*, 1). Have a solid devotion to the Mother of God, who is so honored in your land.

As a pledge of Our fatherly affection and Our encouragement, We give you with all Our heart Our Apostolic Blessing.
