



The Holy See

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

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER PAUL VI
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE**

*Sydney, Australia
Tuesday, 1 December 1970*

We have come among you not only to talk to you, but also, and especially, to listen to you. And gladly We have listened to you, devoting Our attention to the conclusions of your assembly. It will be, moreover, a pleasant duty for Us to recall your discourses and reflect on your discussions and deliberations, storing up for Ourselves and for the whole Church your experience and wisdom, in relation both to the Church's doctrine and her pastoral guidance; and so We abstain now from commenting on the themes which you have dealt with in your meeting.

We do not, however, wish to deprive Ourselves of the pleasure, or release Ourselves from the duty, of saying a fraternal word to you on so exceptional and favourable an occasion. Thus We return to the theme of unity within the Church and the unity of the Church. This very encounter is a celebration of this external distinguishing mark of the Church of Christ; it likewise celebrates the internal mystical characteristic of the same Church of Christ, which he founded in unity, manifesting in a supremely clear way his wish «that they may be one» (*Jo. 17: 11, 21-23*).

Let us reflect together a moment on unity in the Church. We shall do well to consider how much theological thought was given to this theme down the centuries: from the unforgettable and prophetic words of the «Didache» (Cfr. *Didache*, 9: 4; 10: 5), and of the letters of Saint Ignatius of Antioch (Cfr. *Philad.* 4; *Eph.* 20: 2; *Smyrn.* 1: 2; etc.), to the treatise of Saint Cyprian (*De Catholicae Ecclesiae Unitate*) to the thought of Saint Ambrose (Cfr. *Eph.* 11: 4; *PL.* 16: 986), of Saint Augustine especially, of Saint Leo, and to the great theologians of the Middle Ages (Cfr. S.

TH. 11: 8) and of the Renaissance (Cfr. Cajetan, Bellarmine, Suarez, etc.), and down to the modern writers (Cfr. J. Adam Moehler in particular, Newman, Scheeben, Perrone, Clarissac, Congar, Hamer, Cardinal Journet in his great synthesis on *L'Eglise du Verbe Incarné*), and finally to the post-conciliar theologians (Cfr., among the many, Philips, etc.). We must not forget the great encyclical *Mystici Corporis* of Pope Pius XII. And we must always keep before us the documents of the Second Vatican Council, in particular the two constitutions *Lumen gentium* and *Gaudium et spes*, in which the Church's doctrinal awareness of herself and of her historical and concrete position in the modern world is expressed in an incomparable manner.

We permit Ourselves to remind you of this great cultural fact of the Church of today, on account of its first-rank importance for ecclesial life, and on account of the obligation springing from it for us bishops, witnesses of the faith and shepherds of the People of God-the obligation to take up a secure position on the teaching concerning the Church, and especially on her unity. It is her unity which must give to the Church's countenance her divinity - reflected radiance, the sign of her authenticity and her symbolic exemplarity also for the contemporary world which is orientated towards temporal unification in a peaceful civilization.

It is for you, venerable brothers, to accept this obvious recommendation and to pursue in depth a study so attractive, so vast, so complex as is that of our dearly loved Catholic Church, for which Christ shed his blood (Cfr. *Eph.* 5: 25).

It is for Us, on the other hand, barely to touch on two aspects of this intimate communion of the Church within herself.

The first communion, the first unity, is that of faith.

Unity in faith is necessary and fundamental, as you know. On this demand there can be no compromise. No matter how different are the subjective conditions of the believer, we cannot admit uncertainly, doubt or ambiguity concerning the supreme gift, which Revelation has given us, about God the Father, the almighty, Creator of all things, the immanent Principle of all that exists, the transcendental and inexpressible Being, worthy of unlimited adoration and love on the part of us who have the indescribable good fortune to be raised from the level of creatures to that of children of God. Likewise we can have no hesitation about recognizing in Jesus Christ the Word made man, the Teacher of supreme truths about man's destinies, the sacrificed and risen Saviour of mankind, the head under whom everything is brought together (Cfr. *Eph.* 1: 10), and the one who by his Cross draws all men to himself (*Io.* 12: 32) and makes of men who are faithful one mystical Body (Cfr. *Eph.* 4: 4). We can have no doubts about the Holy Spirit, who gives life and bears witness of himself within our hearts (Cfr. *Io.* 15: 26; 16: 13; *Rom.* 8: 16; etc.), and who gives the Church qualified ministers for decisive witness on religious truths (Cfr. *2 Cor.* 10: 5-6). We cannot prescind from the great reality emanating from Christ, his continuation, his social and historical Body, visible and mystical, his Church, the sign and instrument for the salvation of

mankind. In this regard we cannot forget the lapidary words of Saint Augustine: «The Christian has nothing to fear so much as being separated from the body of Christ» (*In Io. Tr.* 27: 6; *PL* 35: 1618). In a word, the Creed, our Creed, is for us inalienable. It is our riches. It is our life. With this security - for the confirming of which, as Peter's humble but authentic successor, we have been given special power by Christ the Lord (*Luc.* 22: 32)-We look at the human reality of Catholicism. By its very definition, it is for all men, for all races, for all nations, for all the earth.

How can Catholicism, so firm and so jealous about its unity, embrace all men, who are so different from each other? Does it perhaps demand absolute uniformity in all manifestations of life? Is there perhaps only one practical and historical way of interpreting the true and unique faith of Christ? You know, brothers, how easy and clear is the answer to this disturbing question. It was given by the Holy Spirit himself on the day of Pentecost, when those who had been filled by the divine outpouring sent from heaven by Christ in fire and in wind began to speak foreign languages so that each of their listeners heard them «in his own native language» (*Act.* 2: 6), although they belonged to different races. Then too the reply is given by the recent Council, amply and repeatedly, especially in the now famous Decree *Ad gentes*, where the unity which marks Catholicism is shown in harmony with its apostolicity. Far from smothering what is good and original in every form of human culture it accepts, respects and puts to use the genius of each people, endowing with variety and beauty the one seamless garment (*Io.* 19: 23) of the Church of Christ (Cfr. *Ps.* 44: 10; *Ad gentes*, 22; etc.).

So, one may ask, is «pluralism» admitted? Yes, but the significance of this word must be well understood. It must on no account contradict the substantial unity of Christianity (Cfr. *Eph.* 4: 3-6). You are acquainted with some dangers that lie hidden in pluralism. These occur when it is not limited to the contingent forms of religious life, but presumes to authorize individual and arbitrary interpretations of Catholic dogma, or to set up as a criterion of truth the popular mentality, or to prescind in theological study from authentic tradition and from the responsible magisterium of the Church.

The second aspect of the Catholic communion is that of charity. You know what supreme importance charity has in the whole of the divine design of the Catholic religion, and what particular place charity has in the connecting fabric of ecclesial unity. We must practice in its ecclesial aspects, which the Council has emphasized, a more conscious and active charity. The People of God must accordingly be progressively educated in mutual love for each of its members; the whole community of the Church must by means of charity feel itself united within itself, undivided, living in solidarity and therefore distinct (Cfr. *1 Cor.* 1: 10; 12: 25-26; *2 Cor.* 6: 14-18). Hierarchical relationships, pastoral ones (as is well known), collegial relationships, those between different ministerial functions, social ones, domestic ones-all must have running through them an ever active stream of charity, having for its immediate effects service-that is, self-sacrifice and self-giving-and unity.

The Church is charity; the Church is unity. This, it seems to us, is the principal virtue demanded of the Catholic Church at this moment of history, for it is a time that is spiritually very disturbed, to the point of inspiring fear of great and ruinous upheavals. The Church will be solid and strong if she is united within herself in faith and by charity. Many ask what must the Church do to draw close to her the hostile and unbelieving world. Unity in faith and love will be the witness which will have a salutary action on the world, in accordance with the word which Jesus left to us (*Jo.* 17: 21).

This, venerable brothers, is the message which We leave you in the name of Christ in memory of this encounter: «that all may be one». With Our fraternal Apostolic Blessing.