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POPE JOHN PAUL II IN MEXICO

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Traveler of Peace & Hope

*Homily given at Evening Outdoor Mass
in Independence Plaza, Santo Domingo,
Dominican Republic*

January 25, 1979

1. At this eucharist where we share the same faith in Christ, the bishop of Rome and the universal church, present among you, gives you his salutation of peace: "Grace and peace be with you on behalf of God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. 1:3).

I have come to these American lands as the traveler of peace and hope, to participate in an ecclesiastical event of evangelization, inspired by the words of the apostle Paul: "Yet preaching the Gospel is not the subject of a boast; I am under compulsion and have no choice. I am ruined if I do not preach it!" (1 Cor. 9:16).

This present period of the history of humanity requires a renewed transmission of faith in order to communicate to men today the perennial message of Christ, adapted to the realistic conditions of life.

This evangelization is a constant and essential requirement of ecclesiastical dynamics. Paul VI in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* affirmed that "evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize" (n. 14.)

And the same pope specified that "as an evangelizer, Christ first of all proclaims a kingdom, the kingdom of God. . . . As the kernel and center of his good news, Christ proclaims salvation, this great gift of God which is liberation from everything that oppresses man but which is above all liberation from sin and the evil one" (n. 8-9).

2. The church, true to its mission, continues to present to men from all times, with the help of the Holy Spirit and guided by the pope, its divine founder's message of salvation.

This Dominican land was once the first consignee, and then the propellant, of a great undertaking of evangelization, which deserves much admiration and gratitude.

Since the end of the 15th century this beloved nation has welcomed the faith of Jesus Christ to which it has remained faithful to this day. The Holy See, for its part, created the first episcopal sees in America here on this island and later, in Santo Domingo, the first primate archbishopric.

In a relatively short period the paths of faith were cut into the Dominican and continental geography, placing the foundation for the living legacy which today we contemplate in what was called the New World.

From the first moments of discovery, the church's preoccupation is manifested: to make God's reign present in the heart of new countries, races and cultures and placed first among your forefathers.

If we wish to pay tribute to those who transplanted the seeds of faith, homage should be given first to the religious orders, who were notable, even at the cost of contributing martyrs, in the task of evangelization. Prominent above all were the Dominicans, Franciscans, Augustinians, Mercedarians and then the Jesuits, who created a full tree from delicate roots. America's soil was prepared by its own spiritual currents to receive the Christian seed.

It was more than a matter of spreading the faith, dissatisfied with its consignee's life. For this reason the church on this island was the first to revindicate justice and promote the defense of human rights in the lands which were opening to evangelization.

The lessons of humanism, spiritualism and the need to dignify man, are what we are taught by Antonio Montesinos, Cordoba, Bartolome de las Casas, who were echoed in other places by Juan de Zumarraga, Motolinia, Vasco de Quiroga, Jose de Anchieta, Toribio de Mogrovejo, Nobrega and others. These are men in whom preoccupation with the weak, the undefended, the indigenous is inherent, people who are worthy of respect as persons and as carriers of God's image. From there the first international right was born with Francisco de Vitoria.

3. This great lesson is still valid today for the church. It cannot be dissociated, confused or exhausted. It would mean closing off infinite spaces to man which had been opened to them by God. And it would mean falsifying the profound and complete significance of evangelization, which is above all the announcement of the good word of Christ the savior.

The church, an expert on humanity, faithful to the signs of the times and expert on obedience to the urgent invitation of the last council, today wants to continue its mission of faith and defense of human rights. She invites Christians to commit themselves to constructing a more just, humane and habitable world which does not close itself in, but rather, opens itself to God.

Making this world more just means, among other things, to make the effort, to strive to have a world in which no more children lack sufficient nutrition, education, instruction; that there be no more children without proper formation; that there be no more poor peasants without land so that they can live and develop with dignity; that there be no more work-

ers mistreated nor whose rights are lessened; that there be no more systems which permit the exploitation of man by man or by the state; that there be no more corruption; that there be no more who have too much while others are lacking everything through no fault of their own; that there not be so many families who are broken, disunited, insufficiently attended; that there be no injustice or inequality in administering justice; that there be no one who is not supported by the law and that the law support everyone equally; that force not prevail over truth and rights, but rather truth and rights over force; and that the economic and political never prevail over the human.

4. But do not be content with a more human world. Make an explicitly more divine world, more according to God, governed by faith and that which faith inspires—the moral, religious and social progress of man. Do not lose sight of the vertical orientation of evangelization. It can liberate man, because it is the revelation of love. The love of the Father for men, for all and each man, love revealed by Jesus Christ. “Yes, God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him may not die, but have eternal life” (Jn. 3:16).

Jesus Christ has shown this love throughout all his hidden life—“He has done everything well!” (Mk. 7:37)—and by announcing the Gospel, then, with his death and resurrection, the paschal mystery in which man finds his definite vocation to eternal life, to union with God. This is the eschatological dimension of love.

Beloved children: I'll finish by exhorting you always to be worthy of the faith you have received. Love Christ, love man for him and live the devotion to our dear mother in heaven, whom you invoke with the lovely name of Our Lady of Altagracia, whom the pope wishes to leave with a diadem as a homage of devotion. This will help you to walk to Christ, conserving and developing fully the seed planted by your first evangelizers. It is what the pope expects of all of you—of you, children of Cuba present here, of Jamaica, of Curacao and the Antilles, of Haiti, of Venezuela and of the United States and, above all, of you, children of the Dominican land. So be it.

A Call To Fidelity

Homily given during Eucharistic celebration
in Cathedral of the Assumption, Mexico City

January 26, 1979

Dear brothers in the episcopate and beloved sons:

Just a few hours ago I stepped on this blessed earth for the first time, with great emotion. Now I meet you, the church and Mexican people, on this day destined to be the day of Mexico.

It is a meeting which started with my arrival in this beautiful city. It continued during my travel through the streets and sites and grew in intensity as we entered this cathedral. But it is here, in this Mass, that it comes to its climax.

Let us place our gathering under the protection of the Mother of God, the Virgin of Guadalupe, whom the Mexican people love with such deep devotion.

We address ourselves to you, bishops of the church, to you priests, religious and seminarians, members of lay institutes, laymen of apostolic movements. To you children, young men and women, adults, the aged. To you all, the Mexican people, who have such a splendid tradition of love for Christ, even during trials. To you who carry in the bottom of your hearts your devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe. To you the pope speaks about something that should be the essence of your Christian and Marian devotion: fidelity to the church.

Among all the titles given to the Virgin through the centuries for her motherly love for Christians, there is one that stands out: *virgo fidelis* (faithful virgin). But what does this fidelity of Mary mean? What are the dimensions of this fidelity?

The first dimension is searching. Mary was faithful when she searched for the profound meaning of the will of God in her life. *Quomodo fiat?* (How might this be?) she asked the angel of the annunciation. In the Old Testament this searching is already translated into an expression of rare beauty, of profound spiritual meaning: to seek the face of the Lord. There can be no fidelity if there is not this deep-seated searching, if we cannot find in the heart of man the question to which only God is the answer.

The second dimension of this fidelity is called acceptance, to accept. The *quomodo fiat* is transformed on the lips of Mary as a *fiat* (let it be). Let it be, I am willing, I accept. This is the moment of truth for fidelity, the moment in which man comes to realize that he can never fully under-

stand the why, that there are in God's design more areas of mystery than explanations, that no matter how hard he tries, he will never be able to accept everything.

Then the person is ready to accept this mystery and gives a place in his heart, as Mary kept all these things in her heart (Lk. 2:19; cf. Lk. 3:15). It is the moment in which man opens himself to this mystery, not in the way someone gives up facing an enigma or the absurd, but rather with the openness of someone letting himself be possessed by something—someone—bigger than his heart. This acceptance is fulfilled through faith which is the union of our being with the mystery that is revealed.

Coherence is the third dimension of fidelity. To live in accordance with what one believes. To adjust one's life to what one adheres to. To accept misunderstanding, persecutions, before we break with what we believe in, before there is a break between life and convictions: that is coherence. Here we find perhaps the most intimate nucleus of fidelity.

But fidelity must stand the most difficult test: perseverance. That is the fourth dimension of fidelity, perseverance. It is easy to be coherent for a day or even a few days. It is difficult, however important, to be coherent through an entire life of faith. It is easy to be coherent at the hour of elation, but difficult in the hour of tribulation. And we can call it fidelity when it lasts a lifetime.

The *fiat* of Mary at the annunciation finds its fulfillment in the *fiat* at the foot of the cross. To be faithful is to remain faithful in private to what we proclaimed in public.

Of all the lessons Our Lady teaches to her Mexican children, perhaps the most important is this lesson in fidelity, that fidelity which the pope is pleased to find here and expects from the Mexican people.

It is often said of my homeland: "*Polonia semper fidelis.*" I would like to be able to say also: "*Mexico semper fidelis*, Mexico, always faithful."

In fact the religious history of this nation is a history of fidelity. Fidelity to the seeds of the faith sown by the first missionaries.

Fidelity to a simple but profound faith, ready in its sincerity to stand sacrifice. Fidelity in devotion to Mary. Fidelity to the pope. I did not have to come to Mexico to learn of this fidelity to the vicar of Christ. I knew it. But I thank the Lord that I can see it first hand in the fervor of your welcome.

In this solemn hour I invite you to grow in that fidelity. I invite you to translate it into a strong and intelligent fidelity to the church of today. Are not those the same as the characteristics of Mary's fidelity,

The pope who visits you expects a noble and generous effort on your part to always know better your church. The Second Vatican Council wanted to be a council about the church. Take the documents of the council, especially *Lumen Gentium*, and study it with loving attention. Then you will discover that there is not a "new church!" The council has revealed with more clarity the one church of Christ, one having new dimensions but the same essence.

The pope expects from you a loyal acceptance of the church. You cannot be faithful and remain attached to secondary things, valid in the past but already outdated. You will not be faithful either if you try to build the so-called church of the future, unrelated to the present.

We must be faithful to the church born once and for all from the plan of God: at the cross, the empty tomb and at Pentecost, which is born not of the people or from reason, but from God. She is born today to build among all men a people willing to grow in faith, hope and fraternal love.

The pope expects from you a coherence between your own lives and the life of the church. This coherence implies an awareness of your identity as Catholics, it means giving public witness to it. The church today needs laymen who will give witness to their faith and share her mission in the world, being the ferment of faith, justice and human dignity, in order to build a more human and fraternal world from which we can look up to God.

The pope desires that your coherence in the faith not be short-lived but that it continue and deepen. To belong to the church, to live in the church, to be the church places great demands today. Perhaps it will lead to direct and open persecution, but it could involve the duress of indifference, neglect and discrimination. Then it is easy to fall prey to fear and insecurity. Do not allow these temptations to overcome you. Do not lose your enthusiasm for "being the church," for you must begin everyday anew with greater fervor and strength.

Dear brothers and children: In this eucharist we seal the encounter of the servant of servants of God with the soul and the conscience of the Mexican people. The new pope would like to receive from your lips and hands and lives a commitment to the Lord—a commitment from those under religious vows, of children and youth, of adults and the aged, from everyone, to Christ and his church. Let us place this intention on the altar.

The faithful Virgin, the Mother of Guadalupe, from whom we learn the design of God, may help us in this commitment until the end of our lives, so we can (one day) hear the word of the Lord saying to us: "Come, good and faithful servant, enter the joy of your Lord." (Mt. 25, 21-23). Amen.

A Vision of the Priest's Role

*Address to group of Priests
in Basilica of the Virgin of Guadalupe
in Mexico City*

January 27, 1979

Very dear priests, both secular and religious:

I have just met with representatives of the Mexican nuns. Another of the meetings that I have been looking forward to with great hope during my visit to Mexico is the one that I am having with you here at the sanctuary of our revered and beloved Mother of Guadalupe.

See in this meeting a sign of the affection and interest of the pope. He, as bishop of the universal church, is conscious of your irreplaceable role and he feels very close to you who are the central pieces in the ecclesiastical task as principal collaborators of the bishops, as participants in the saving powers of Christ, as witnesses, as announcers of his Gospel, and as promoters of the faith and the apostolic vocation of the people of God. And I do not want to forget here so many other consecrated souls, valued collaborators, even without priestly character, in many important sectors of the work of the church.

Not only do you have a qualified presence in the apostolic work of the church, but your love of man, inspired in God, is particularly notable among students, among the sick and needy, among intellectuals, among the poor who clamor for understanding and help, and among so many people who come to you in search of advice and encouragement.

Because of your gift of yourself to God and the church, of your closeness to man, receive my gratitude in the name of Christ.

Servants of a sublime cause, the fate of the church in those sectors entrusted to your pastoral care depends largely upon you. This imposes upon you a profound awareness of the greatness of the mission received and the necessity of preparing yourselves continually for it.

It means, in effect, dear brothers and sons, that it is the church of Christ—what respect and love this should inspire in us—which you should serve joyously in holiness of life.

This high and exacting service could not be given without a clear and deep-rooted conviction of your identity as priests of Christ, as keepers and administrators of the mysteries of God, instruments of salvation for mankind, witnesses of a kingdom which begins in this world but which is fulfilled in the hereafter. Confronted by these truths of the faith, why do you doubt your own identity? Why vacillate in regard to

the value of your own life? Why hesitate before the road taken?

To conserve and reaffirm this firm and persevering conviction, look to the model, Christ; reawaken the supernatural values in your life; ask for the needed help from on high in constant and confident prayer. Today, as yesterday, this is of absolute necessity. And also be faithful to the frequent practice of the sacrament of reconciliation, daily meditation, to devotion to the Blessed Virgin by means of the rosary. In a word, cultivate union with God by means of a profound interior life. Let this be your first task. Do not be afraid that the time consecrated to the Lord will take something away from your apostolic work. On the contrary, it will be a source of fruitfulness in your ministry.

You are people who have made the Gospel your life's profession. From the Gospel you should take the essential criteria of the faith—not merely psychological and sociological criteria—which produce a harmonious synthesis between spirituality and ministry. Do not allow a “profession-alization” of your calling, do not lower the esteem which you owe your consecrated celibacy or chastity, accepted for love of the kingdom in an unlimited spiritual paternity (1 Cor. 4:15). To them (the priests) we owe our merciful rebirth, says St. John Chrysostom, and knowledge of true liberty (“In Regard to Priests,” 4-6).

You are participants in the ministry of Christ for the service of the unity of the community, a service which is realized by virtue of the position (you) received to direct the people of God, forgive sins and offer the eucharistic sacrifice (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 10; *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 2); a specific priestly service that cannot be replaced in the Christian community by the common priesthood of the faithful, (which is) essentially different (*Lumen Gentium*, 10).

You are members of a particular church whose center of unity is the bishop (*Christus Dominus*, 28), with whom every priest should observe an attitude of unity and obedience. For your part, members of religious communities in reference to pastoral activities you cannot deny your loyal collaboration and obedience to the local hierarchy, claiming an exclusive dependence in respect to the universal church (cf. *Christus Dominus*, 34). Much less would it be admissible for priests or religious to have a practice of parallel authority with respect to the bishops—authentic and only teachers of the faith—or the conference of bishops.

You are servants of the people of God, servants of the faith, and administrators and witnesses of the love of Christ for mankind, a love for all that excludes no one, even though it is directed more particularly to the poorest. In this respect, I want to remind you of what I said a short time ago to the general superiors of the religious orders in Rome: “The soul that lives in habitual contact with God and moves within the ardent light of his love knows how to defend itself easily against the

temptations of individualism and its antithesis, which create the risk of painful divisions; it knows how to interpret in the just light of the Gospel the options for the poorest and for each and every victim of human selfishness, without giving in to radical socio-political doctrines that in the long run become inopportune and counterproductive." (Nov. 24, 1978)

You are spiritual guides who must endeavor to orient and better the hearts of the faithful so that, converted, they may live the love of God and neighbor and commit themselves to the welfare and dignity of man.

You are priests and members of religious orders. You are not social directors, political leaders or functionaries of a temporal power. So I repeat to you: Let us not pretend to serve the Gospel if we try to "dilute" our charism through an exaggerated interest in the broad field of temporal problems (speech to the clergy of Rome). Do not forget that temporal leadership can easily become a source of division, while the priest should be a sign and factor of unity, of brotherhood. The secular functions are the proper field of action of the laity, who ought to perfect temporal matters with a Christian spirit. (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 4).

Beloved priests and members of religious orders, I could tell you many other things, but I do not want to make this encounter too long. I will express some other ideas in another place so that you can refer to them.

I end by repeating my great confidence in you. I expect so much from your great love for Christ and for mankind. There is much to do. Let us take to the road with new enthusiasm, united to Christ, below the maternal gaze of the Virgin, Our Lady of Guadalupe, the sweet mother of priests and members of religious orders. With the affectionate blessing of the pope, for you and for all the priests and members of the religious orders of Mexico.

Medellin: After Ten Years

*Homily given at the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe
in Mexico City during opening Eucharistic celebration
for the Third General Assembly of Latin American Bishops*

January 27, 1979

1. Hail Mary!

Dear brothers in the episcopate and dear sons and daughters. How deep is my joy that the first steps on my pilgrimage, as successor of Paul VI and John Paul I, bring me precisely here. They bring me to you, Mary, in this shrine of the people of Mexico and of the whole of Latin America, the shrine in which for so many centuries your motherhood has been manifested.

Hail Mary!

It is with immense love and reverence that I utter these words, words so simple and at the same time so marvelous. No one will ever be able to greet you in a more wonderful way than the way in which the archangel once greeted you at the moment of the annunciation. Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. I repeat these words, words that so many hearts ponder upon and so many lips utter throughout the world. We here present utter them together and we are aware that these are the words with which God himself, through his messenger, greeted you, the woman promised in the Garden of Eden, chosen from eternity as the mother of the word, the mother of divine wisdom, the mother of the Son of God.

Hail, Mother of God!

2. Your Son Jesus Christ is our redeemer and Lord. He is our teacher. All of us gathered here are his disciples. We are the successors of the apostles, of those to whom the Lord said: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations. Baptize them in the name 'of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.' Teach them to carry out everything I have commanded you. And know that I am with you always, until the end of the world!" (Mt. 28:19-20)

Gathered here together, the successor of Peter and the successors of the apostles, we ponder on how admirably these words have been fulfilled in this land.

In fact, scarcely 20 years after the work of evangelization was begun in the New World in 1492, the faith reached Mexico. Soon afterward the first archiepiscopal see was established, presided over by Juan de Zumarraga, supported by other great evangelizers who were to extend Christianity over very wide areas.

No less glorious religious epics were to be written in the southern hemisphere by men such as St. Toribio de Mogrovejo and a long list of others who would deserve to be mentioned here at length. The paths of the faith steadily stretched further until at the end of the first century of evangelization the episcopal sees numbered more than 70, with some 4 million Christians. This singular undertaking was to continue for a long time, until today, after five centuries of evangelization, it embraces almost a half of the entire Catholic Church, which has taken root in the culture of the people of Latin America and forms part of their own identity.

And with the achievement in these lands of Christ's mandate, with the multiplication everywhere of the children of divine adoption through the grace of baptism, the mother appeared too.

In fact, the Son of God, and your Son, from the cross indicated a man to you, Mary, and said: "Woman, there is your son" (Jn. 19:26). And in that man he entrusted to you every person, he entrusted everyone to you. And you, who at the moment of the annunciation, concentrated the whole program of your life in those simple words: "I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you say" (Lk. 1:38), embrace everyone, draw close to everyone, seek everyone out with motherly care. Thus is accomplished what the last council said about your presence in the mystery of Christ and the church. In a wonderful way you are always found in the mystery of Christ, your only Son, because you are present wherever men and women, his brothers and sisters, are present, wherever the church is present.

In fact, when the first missionaries who reached America from lands of eminent Marian tradition taught the rudiments of Christian faith, they also taught love for you, the mother of Jesus and of all people. And ever since the time that the Indian Juan Diego spoke of the sweet Lady of Tepeyac, you, Mother of Guadalupe, have entered decisively into the Christian life of the people of Mexico. No less has been your presence in other places where your children invoke you with tender names, as our Lady of Altigracia, of the Aparecida, of Lujan, and with many other no less affectionate names, not to give an unending list—names by which in each nation and even in each region the peoples of Latin America express their most profound devotion to you, and under which you protect them in their pilgrimage of faith.

The pope—who comes from a country in which your images, especially one, that of Jasna Gora, are also a sign of your presence in the nation's life and its hazardous history—is particularly sensitive to this sign of your presence here, in the people of God in Mexico, in its history, a history which has also not been easy, and at times even dramatic. But you are also equally present in the life of the many other peoples

of Latin America, presiding over and guiding not only their past, whether remote or recent, but also the present moment, with its uncertainties and shadows. The pope perceives in the depths of his heart the special bonds that link you with this people and this people with you, this people that gives you the affectionate name of La Morenita. This people, and indirectly the whole of this vast continent, derives its spiritual unity thanks to the fact that you are its mother, a mother who, through her love, creates, preserves and increases a closeness between her children.

Hail, Mother of Mexico! Mother of Latin America!

3. We meet here at this exceptional and wonderful hour in the history of the world. We have come to this place, conscious that we are at a crucial moment. With this meeting of bishops we wish to link ourselves with the previous conference of the Latin American bishops that took place 10 years ago at Medellin, together with the eucharistic congress at Bogota in which Pope Paul VI of indelible memory took part. We have come here not so much to examine again, 10 years later, the same problem, but rather to review it in a new way, at a new place and at a new moment of history.

We wish to take as our point of departure what is contained in the documents and resolutions of that conference. And at the same time we wish, on the basis of the experiences of the last 10 years and the development of thought and in the light of the experiences of the whole church, to take a correct and necessary step forward.

The Medellin conference took place shortly after the close of Vatican II, the council of our century, and its objective was to take up again the council's essential plans and content, in order to apply them and make them a directing force in the concrete situation of the church in Latin America.

Without the council, the Medellin meeting would not have been possible. That meeting was meant to be an impulse of spiritual renewal, a new "spirit" in the face of the future, in full ecclesial fidelity in interpreting the signs of the time in Latin America. The evangelizing intention was quite clear. It is obvious in the 16 themes dealt with, grouped about three great mutually complementary topics, namely human advancement, evangelization and growth in faith, and the visible church and her structures.

By opting for the man of Latin America seen in his entirety, by showing preferential yet not exclusive love for the poor and by encouraging integral liberation of individuals and peoples, Medellin, the church present in that place, was a call of hope toward more Christian and more human goals.

But more than 10 years have passed. And interpretations have been given that have been at times contradictory, not always correct, not always beneficial for the church. The church is therefore looking for ways that will enable her to understand more deeply and fulfill more zealously the mission she has been given by Christ Jesus.

Much importance in this regard is found in the sessions of the International Synod of Bishops held in the years since then, especially the session of 1974 which concentrated on evangelization. Its conclusions were put together later, in a lively and encouraging manner, in Paul VI's apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. This is the theme that we are today placing before us for study by proposing to consider "evangelization in Latin America's present and future."

As we meet in this sacred place to begin our work, we see before our eyes the upper room in Jerusalem, where the eucharist was instituted. After the Lord's ascension the apostles returned to the same upper room in order to devote themselves to prayer, together with Mary the mother of Christ, and so prepare their hearts to receive the Holy Spirit at the moment of the Church's birth.

That is also why we have come here. We also are awaiting the descent of the Holy Spirit, who will make us see the paths of evangelization by which the church must continue and must be reborn in this great continent of ours. We also wish today and in the days ahead to devote ourselves to prayer with Mary, the mother of our Lord and master—with you, Mother of Hope, Mother of Guadalupe.

4. Let me, John Paul II, bishop of Rome and pope, together with my brothers in the episcopate representing the church in Mexico and the whole of Latin America, at this solemn moment entrust and offer to you, the handmaid of the Lord, the whole heritage of the Gospel, the cross and the resurrection, of which we are all witnesses, apostles, teachers and bishops.

O Mother, help us to be faithful stewards of the great mysteries of God. Help us to teach the truth proclaimed by your Son and to spread love, which is the chief commandment and the first fruit of the Holy Spirit. Help us to strengthen our brethren in faith, help us to awaken hope in eternal life. Help us to guard the great treasures stored in the souls of the people of God entrusted to us.

We offer you the whole of this people of God. We offer you the church in Mexico and in the whole continent. We offer it to you as your own. You have entered so deeply into the hearts of the faithful through that sign of your presence constituted by your image in the Shrine of Guadalupe. Be at home in these hearts for the future also. Be at home in our families, our parishes, missions, dioceses and in all the people.

Do this through the holy church for she, in imitation of you, Mother, wishes in her turn to be a good mother and to care for souls in all their needs, by proclaiming the Gospel, administering the sacraments, safeguarding family life with the sacrament of matrimony, gathering all into the eucharistic community by means of the holy sacrament of the altar, and by being lovingly with them from the cradle until they enter eternity.

O Mother, awaken in the younger generation readiness for the exclusive service of God. Implore for us abundant local vocations to the priesthood and the consecrated life.

O Mother, strengthen the faith of our brothers and sisters in the laity so that in every field of social, professional, cultural and political life they may act in accordance with the truth and the law brought by your Son to mankind, in order to lead everyone to eternal salvation and, at the same time, to make life on earth more human, more worthy of man.

The church that is carrying out her task among the American nations, the church in Mexico, wishes to serve this sublime cause with all her strength and with renewed missionary spirit. Mother, enable us to serve the church in truth and justice. Make us follow this way ourselves and lead others, without ever straying along twisted paths, dragging others with us.

We offer and entrust to you everybody and everything for which we have pastoral responsibility, confident that you will be with us and will help us carry out what your Son has told us to do (cf. Jn. 2:5). We bring you this unlimited trust. With this trust I, John Paul II, with all my brothers in the episcopate of Mexico and Latin America, wish to bring you still more strongly to our ministry, to the church and to the life of our nations. We wish to place in your hands the whole of our future, the future of evangelization in Latin America.

Queen of the Apostles, accept our readiness to serve unreservedly the cause of your Son, the cause of the Gospel and the cause of peace based on justice and love between individuals and peoples.

Queen of Peace, save the nations and peoples of the whole continent—they have so much trust in you—from wars, hatred and subversion. Make everybody, whether they are rulers or subjects, learn to live in peace, educate themselves for peace, and do what is demanded by justice and respect for the rights of every person, so that peace may be firmly established.

O Handmaid of the Lord, accept our trustful offering. May your maternal presence in the mystery of Christ and of the church become a source of joy and freedom for each and every one, a source of that freedom through which "Christ has set us free" (Gal. 5:1), and in the

end, a source of that peace that the world cannot give but which is only given by Christ (cf. Jn. 14:27).

Finally, O Mother, recalling and confirming the gesture of my predecessors Benedict XIV and Pius X, who proclaimed you patroness of Mexico and of the whole of Latin America, I present to you a diadem in the name of all your Mexican and Latin American children, that you may keep them under your protection, preserve their harmony in faith and their fidelity to Christ, your Son. Amen.

The Consecrated Life of Religious Women

*Address to Group of Nuns
at Michelangelo Institute
in Mexico City, Mexico*

January 27, 1979

My dear daughters:

It would have been impossible to find a better place for the meeting of the pope with the nuns of Mexico than this shrine, where the Virgin of Guadalupe, the mother, is so devoutly revered. She is the perfect model of womanhood, the best example of a life entirely consecrated to her Son the savior, in an everlasting internal attitude of faith, hope and loving dedication to a supernatural mission.

In this privileged place and before this image of the Virgin, the pope wants to share a few moments with you, who represent the more than 20,000 nuns scattered all over Mexico as well as outside the homeland.

You are a very important force within the church and in society itself, spread in countless sectors, such as schools, hospitals welfare and social work, parish duties, catechesis and many other works. You belong to different religious institutions, but you all share the same ideal, with different charisms: to follow Christ, to bear a living testimony of the perpetuity of his message.

Yours is a vocation which deserves the highest praise from the pope and the church, yesterday as today. Therefore, I want to express my joyful confidence in you and encourage you not to grow faint in the path you have chosen, that it is worth continuing with renewed spirituality and enthusiasm. Know the pope accompanies you with his prayer and is pleased by your fidelity to your vocation, to Christ and to the church.

At the same time, however, you will allow me to add some reflections that I offer for your consideration and examination.

It is true that in most nuns, there prevails a worthy spirit of fidelity to their own commitment and that certain aspects of great vitality in religious life may be perceived, together with a return to a more evangelical vision, an increasing solidarity among the religious institutions and a more profound closeness to the poor, the object of a just priority in our attention. These cause profound joy and optimism.

But there are also examples of confusion about the essence of consecrated life and its own charism. Sometimes prayer is left aside and

substituted by action; vows are interpreted according to a secularizing mentality that dims the religious motivations of the chosen state; community life is abandoned with a certain ease; socio-political stands are adopted as the real goals, even with clearly defined ideological radicalizations.

And when at times the certainties of faith become darkened, reasons are found to look for new horizons and experiences, perhaps on the pretext of being closer to man, even very concrete groups chosen on criteria that are not always evangelical.

Dear nuns: Never forget that to keep a clear concept of your consecrated life you will need a more profound vision of faith, one that is fed and supported by prayer (*Perfectae Caritatis*, 6). This will make you overcome every uncertainty about your own identity, which will keep you faithful to that vertical dimension that is essential in order to identify yourselves with Christ and be authentic witnesses of the kingdom of God for the men of the world today.

Only through this solicitude for the interests of Christ will you be able to give the charism of prophecy its adequate dimension of witnessing the Lord. Avoid options on behalf of the poor and needy which do not arise from the criteria of the Gospel but are inspired by socio-political motivations which, as I said recently to the general superiors in Rome, in the long run will be proved inopportune and counterproductive.

You have chosen as a way of life the following of certain values that are not merely human, although these have to be considered in their true measure. You have chosen to serve others for the love of God. Never forget that the human being is not trained in the mere earthly dimension. You, as professionals of the faith and experts in the sublime knowledge of Christ (cf. Phil. 3:18), open them to the calling and dimension of eternity, in which you yourselves must live.

I could tell you many other things. Take, as if I had said it to you, everything I expressed to the general superiors in Rome in my speech of last Nov. 16. How much you can do for the church and for humanity! They await your generous giving of yourselves, the dedication of your free heart that will increase unsuspectingly its potentialities of love in a world that is losing its capacity for altruism, for self-sacrificing and disinterested love. Remember, in effect, that you are mystical spouses of Christ and of Christ crucified (cf. 2 Cor. 4:5).

The church repeats today its trust in you: Be living testimonies of this new civilization of love that my predecessor Paul VI so correctly proclaimed.

So that you will be strengthened in this magnificent and hopeful task by the force from on high and be kept in a renewed spiritual youth and fidelity to these purposes, I give you a special blessing that I extend to all the nuns of Mexico.

The Family: Hope of Latin America

*Homily given during Mass
celebrated in Puebla, Mexico
on first day of the Third Assembly
of Latin American Bishops*

January 28, 1979

Dearest sons and daughters:

Puebla de los Angeles (City of the Angels)! The sonorous and expressive name of your city today is on the lips of millions throughout Latin America and the whole world. Your city becomes the symbol and sign of the Latin American church. It is here, in fact, starting today, that the bishops of the whole continent, convened by the successor of Peter, meet to reflect on the mission of the pastors in this part of the world in this singular hour of history.

The pope wanted to climb this height from where all Latin America appears to unfold. From this altar raised among the mountains, contemplating the outline of each of the nations, the pope wanted to celebrate this eucharistic sacrifice in order to invoke on this conference, its participants and its work, the light, the warmth and all the gifts of the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

Nothing is more natural or necessary than to invoke the Spirit under this circumstance. The great assembly which is now beginning is, in effect, in its deepest essence, an ecclesiastical gathering. It is ecclesiastical because those who are gathered here are the pastors of the church of God in Latin America. It is ecclesiastical because of the theme that is being studied; "The Mission of the Church in the Continent." It is ecclesiastical because of its objectives of making more alive and effective the unique contribution that the church has to offer the well-being, the harmony, the justice and peace of these nations. Now then, there is no ecclesiastical assembly if the Spirit of God is not there in the fullness of his mysterious action.

The pope invokes the Spirit with all the fervor of his heart. Let the place where the bishops gather be a new Cenacle, much larger than the one in Jerusalem, where there were only 11 apostles on that morning, but, like the one in Jerusalem, open to the flames of the Paraclete and the strength of a renewed Pentecost.

May the Spirit accomplish in you bishops who are gathered here the multiform mission he was given by the Lord Jesus. Interpreter of God, make understandable his plan and his word, inaccessible to simple human reason (cf. Jn. 14, 26), opening the minds of these pastors and

guiding them to the truth (cf. 16, 13). Witness of God, testify in their consciences and hearts and make them consistent, credible and effective witnesses during their work (cf. Jn. 15, 26). Mediator and Comforter, give them courage against the sins of the world (cf. Jn. 16, 8) and place on their lips that which must be said, especially in those moments when this testimony will mean suffering and fatigue.

I entreat you, therefore, dear sons and daughters, to join me in this eucharist, in this invocation to the Spirit. It is not for themselves or their personal interests that the bishops, who have come from all the environments of the continent, are gathered here. It is for you, the people of God in these lands, and for your well-being. Participate, therefore, in this third general assembly by praying each day that each and every one of them will receive the abundance of the Holy Spirit.

It has been said, in a beautiful and profound way, that our God in his innermost mystery is not a solitary being, but a family, because he bears within himself fatherhood, sonship and the essence of the family, which is love. This love in the Holy Family is the Holy Spirit. The subject of the family is not, therefore, foreign to the subject of the Holy Spirit. Permit the pope to say to you some words on this theme of the family—which will certainly occupy the bishops during these days.

You know the profound and compelling terms in which the Conference of Medellin spoke of the family. The bishops, in that year 1968, saw in your great sense of the family a fundamental part of your Latin American culture. They clearly saw that for the good of your countries Latin American families should always have three roles: education in the faith, formation of persons and promotion of development. They also underlined the grave obstacles that families must combat in order to achieve this triple task.

They recommended, therefore, pastoral attention to families as one of the highest priorities of the church in the continent.

The church in Latin America is pleased with what it has been able to achieve in respect to the family in the past 10 years. But it recognizes with humility all that remains to be done and it sees that, far from having lost its priority, the pastoral plan for the family appears today even more urgent as a most important element of the teaching of the Gospel.

The church is aware, in effect, that in these days the family confronts serious problems in Latin America. Recently, some countries have introduced divorce legislation which conveys a new menace to the integrity of the family. In the majority of your countries one grieves that an alarming number of children, hope of the future of these nations, are born in unstable homes, or as it is sometimes expressed, in "incomplete

families." Furthermore, in certain places of the "Continent of Hope" this same hope runs the risk of being lost because it grows in the womb of many families who cannot live normally because they must bear the most negative effects of development: depressing rates of disease, poverty and misery, ignorance and illiteracy, inhuman housing conditions, chronic undernourishment and so many other sorrowful realities.

In defense of the family, against all these evils, the church commits itself to give its help. And it invites governments to make a key point of their activities an intelligent, daring and persevering policy directed toward the family, in the recognition that in this, undoubtedly, is found the future—the hope—of the continent.

It should be added that such a family policy should not be understood as an indiscriminate effort to reduce the birth rate at whatever cost—what my predecessor, Paul VI, called "reducing the number of those invited to the banquet of life"—when it is generally known that even for "development" a balanced population rate is indispensable. The intention must be to combine efforts in order to create conditions favorable to the existence of healthy, balanced families—to "increase the food on the table," in the words of Paul VI.

Besides the defense of the family, we also ought to talk about family promotion. Many organizations must contribute to such promotion: governments and governmental organization, schools, trade unions, mass media, neighborhood groups, the different voluntary or spontaneous associations which flourish everywhere nowadays.

The church should also offer its contribution in line with its spiritual mission to preach the Gospel and lead mankind to salvation, which also has a great impact on the well-being of the family.

What can the church do by uniting its efforts with the others? I am sure that your bishops will make a great effort in order to give their best, just and true responses to this question.

Let me tell you how important for the family is the work the church is doing in Latin America. For example, it is preparing couples for marriage, helping families when they experience the normal crises which, if properly understood, can be fruitful and enriching, so that each Christian family becomes a true "domestic church" with all the rich meaning of this expression, preparing great numbers of families to evangelize others, enhancing all the values of family life, helping the incomplete families and stimulating governments to promote in their countries that family policy to which we referred earlier.

My beloved sons and daughters: From this altar St. Peter's successor now feels very united to the families of Latin America. It is as if each

home has opened and the pope could enter it: homes where it is not material possessions that are lacking but perhaps unity and happiness; homes where families live rather modestly and with the uncertainty of tomorrow, helping each other bear a difficult but dignified existence; poor lodgings on the outskirts of your cities where there is much hidden suffering amidst the simple happiness of the poor; humble huts of the rural workers, of the Indians, of the migrants. To each family in particular, the pope would like to say a word of hope and support.

For you, the families that are able to enjoy material comfort, don't be selfish with your happiness. Be open to the others and share with them what you have and they lack. Families oppressed by poverty, don't get discouraged. Without making luxury your objective or making wealth the principle of happiness, search with the help of all to overcome the difficult times in the hope of better days. Families tried by any physical or moral sorrow, such as sickness or misery, do not add bitterness or desperation to such sufferings, but defeat sorrow with hope. Families of Latin America, be certain that the pope knows you and wants to know you better because he loves you with the sweetness of a father.

This, in the context of the people's visit to Mexico, is the journey of the family. Latin American families here around the altar or present through the mass media, receive the visit that the pope wants to make to each one of you. Give the pope the joy of seeing you grow in the Christian values that are your values in order that Latin America may find, in her millions of families, reasons to trust, to hope, to fight and to build.

Pope John Paul's Address at Puebla

*Address given at Opening of Third General Assembly
of the Latin American Bishops in Puebla, Mexico*

January 28, 1979

Beloved brothers in the episcopate:

This hour that I have the happiness to experience with you is certainly a historic one for the church in Latin America. World opinion is aware of this, as are the faithful members of your local churches, and especially you yourselves are aware of it, you who will be the protagonists and leaders of this hour.

It is also an hour of grace, marked by the drawing near of the Lord, by a very special presence and action of the Spirit of God. For this reason we have confidently invoked that Spirit at the beginning of our work. For this reason also I now wish to implore you, as a brother to very beloved brothers: All the days of this conference and in every one of its acts, let yourselves be led by the Spirit, open yourselves to his inspiration and his impulse; let it be he and no other Spirit that guides and strengthens you.

Under the guidance of this Spirit, for the third time in the last 25 years you, the bishops of all the countries representing the episcopate of the continent of Latin America, have gathered together to study more deeply together the meaning of your mission in the face of the new demands of your peoples.

The conference that is now opening, convoked by the revered Paul VI, confirmed by my unforgettable predecessor John Paul I and reconfirmed by myself as one of the first acts of my pontificate, is linked with the conference now long past, held in Rio de Janeiro, which had as its most notable result the birth of the Latin American Bishops Council (CELAM). But it is linked even more closely with the second conference of Medellin, of which it marks the 10th anniversary.

In these last 10 years, how much progress humanity has made and with humanity and at its service, how much progress the church has made. This third conference cannot disregard that reality. It will therefore have to take as its point of departure the conclusions of Medellin, with all the positive elements that they contained, but without ignoring the incorrect interpretations made at times and which call for calm discernment, opportune criticism and clear choices of position.

You will be guided in your debates by the working document, prepared with such care so as to constitute the constant point of reference.

But you will also have at hand Paul VI's apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. With what care the great pontiff approved as the conference's theme: "The present and the future of evangelization in Latin America." Those who were close to him during the months when the assembly was being prepared can tell you this. They can also bear witness to the gratitude with which he learned that the basic material of the whole conference would be this text, into which he put his whole pastoral soul, as his life drew to a close. Now that he has "closed his eyes to this world's scene" (Testament of Paul VI), this document becomes a spiritual testament that the conference will have to scrutinize with love and diligence, in order to make it the other obligatory point of reference, and in order to see how to put it into practice. The whole church is grateful to you for the example that you are giving, for what you are doing and what other local churches will perhaps do in their turn.

The pope wishes to be with you at the beginning of your labors, and he is thankful to the Father of Lights from whom comes down every perfect gift (cf. Js. 1:17), for having been able to be with you at yesterday's solemn Mass, under the maternal gaze of the Virgin of Guadalupe, as also at the Mass this morning. I would very much like to stay with you in prayer, reflection and work. Be sure that I shall stay with you in spirit, while the "anxiety for all the churches" (2 Cor. 11:28) calls me elsewhere. I wish at least, before continuing my pastoral visit through Mexico and before my return to Rome, to leave you as a pledge of my spiritual presence a few words, uttered with the solicitous care of a father, words which are the echo of my main preoccupations regarding the theme you have to deal with and regarding the life of the church in these beloved countries.

I. TEACHERS OF THE TRUTH

It is a great consolation for the universal Father to note that you come together here not as a symposium of experts, not as a parliament of politicians, not as a congress of scientists or technologists, however important such assemblies may be, but as a fraternal encounter of pastors of the church. And as pastors you have a vivid awareness that your principal duty is to be teachers of the truth. Not a human and rational truth, but the truth that comes from God, the truth that brings with it the principle of the authentic liberation of man: "You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (Jn. 8:32); that truth which is the only one that offers a solid basis for an adequate "praxis."

I.1. To be watchful for purity of doctrine, the basis for building up the Christian community, is therefore, together with the proclamation of the Gospel, the primary and irreplaceable duty of the pastor, of the teacher of the faith. How often St. Paul emphasized this, convinced as

he was of the seriousness of the accomplishment of this duty (cf. 1 Tm. 1:3-7, 18-20 4:11,16; 2 Tm. 1:4-14). Over and above unity in love, unity in truth is always urgent for us. The beloved Pope Paul VI, in the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, said: "The Gospel entrusted to us is also the word of truth. A truth which liberates and which alone gives peace of heart is what people are looking for when we proclaim the good news to them. The truth about God, about man and his mysterious destiny, about the world. . . . The preacher of the Gospel will therefore be a person who even at the price of personal renunciation and suffering always seeks the truth that he must transmit to others. He never betrays or hides truth out of a desire to please men, in order to astonish or to shock, nor for the sake of originality or a desire to make an impression. . . . We are pastors of the faithful people, and our pastoral service impels us to preserve, defend and to communicate the truth regardless of the sacrifices that this involves" (n. 78).

Truth Concerning Jesus Christ

1.2. From you, pastors, the faithful of your countries expect and demand above all a careful and zealous transmission of the truth concerning Jesus Christ. This truth is at the center of evangelization and constitutes its essential content: "There is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God are not proclaimed" (EN, 22).

The vigor of the faith of millions of people will depend on the living knowledge of this truth. The strength of their support for the church and of their active presence as Christians in the world will also depend on it. Choices, values, attitudes and modes of behavior capable of orienting and defining our Christian life and of creating new people and hence a new humanity for the conversion of the individual and social conscience will also derive from this knowledge (cf. EN, 18).

Light on so many doctrinal and pastoral themes and questions that you intend to study in these coming days must come from a solid Christology.

1.3. And then we have to confess Christ before history and the world with conviction that is profound, deeply felt and lived, just as Peter confessed him: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Mt. 16:16).

This is the good news, in a certain sense unique: The church lives by it and for it, just as she draws from it everything that she has to offer to people, without any distinction of nation, culture, race, time, age or condition. For this reason "from that confession of faith (Peter's) the sacred history of salvation and of the people of God could not fail to take on a new dimension" (Homily of Pope John Paul II at the solemn inauguration of his pontificate, Oct. 22, 1978.)

This is the one Gospel, and "even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a Gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed," as the apostle wrote in very clear terms (Gal. 1:8).

1.4. In fact, today there occur in many places—the phenomenon is not a new one—"re-readings" of the Gospel, the result of theoretical speculations rather than authentic meditation on the word of God and a true commitment to the Gospel. They cause confusion by diverging from the central criteria of the faith of the church, and some people have the effrontery to pass them on, under the guise of catechesis, to the Christian communities.

In some cases either Christ's divinity is passed over in silence, or some people in fact fall into forms of interpretation at variance with the church's faith. Christ is said to be merely a "prophet," one who proclaimed God's kingdom and love but not the true Son of God, and therefore not the center and object of the very gospel message.

In other cases people claim to show Jesus as politically committed, as one who fought against Roman oppression and the authorities, and also as one involved in the class struggle. This idea of Christ as a political figure, a revolutionary, as the subversive man from Nazareth, does not tally with the church's catechesis. By confusing the insidious pretexts of Jesus' accusers with the—very different—attitude of Jesus himself, some people adduce as the cause of his death the outcome of a political conflict, and nothing is said of the Lord's will to deliver himself and of his consciousness of his redemptive mission. The Gospels clearly show that for Jesus anything that would alter his mission as the servant of Yahweh was a temptation (Lk. 4:5). He does not accept the position of those who mixed the things of God with merely political attitudes (cf. Mt. 22:21; Mk. 12:17; Jn. 18:36). He unequivocally rejects recourse to violence. He opens his message of conversion to everybody without excluding the very publicans. The perspective of his mission is much deeper. It consists in complete salvation through a transforming, peacemaking, pardoning and reconciling love.

There is no doubt, moreover, that all this is very demanding for the attitude of the Christian who wishes truly to serve his least brethren, the poor, the needy, those on the margin of society, in a word, all those who in their lives reflect the sorrowing face of the Lord (*Lumen Gentium*, 8).

1.5. Against such "re-readings," therefore, and against the perhaps brilliant but fragile and inconsistent hypotheses flowing from them, "evangelization in the present and future of Latin America" cannot cease to affirm the church's faith: Jesus Christ, the word and the Son

of God, becomes man in order to come close to man and to offer him, through the power of his mystery, salvation, the great gift of God (EN, 19 and 27).

This is the faith that has permeated your history and has formed the best values of your peoples, and must go on animating, with every energy, the dynamism of your future.

This is the faith that reveals the vocation to harmony and unity that must drive away the dangers of war in this continent of hope, in which the church has been such a powerful factor of integration. This is the faith, finally, which the faithful people of Latin America through their religious practices and popular piety express with such vitality and in such varied ways.

From this faith in Christ, from the bosom of the church, we are able to serve men and women, our peoples, and to penetrate their culture with the Gospel, to transform hearts, and to make systems and structures more human.

Any form of silence, disregard, mutilation or inadequate emphasis regarding the total mystery of Jesus Christ that diverges from the church's faith cannot be the valid content of evangelization. "Today, under the pretext of a piety that is false, under the deceptive appearance of a preaching of the Gospel, some people are trying to deny the Lord Jesus," wrote a great bishop in the midst of the hard crises of the fourth century. And he added: "I speak the truth, so that the cause of the confusion that we are suffering may be known to all. I cannot keep silent." (St. Hilary of Poitiers, *Ad Ausentium* 1-4). Nor can you, the bishops of today, keep silent when this confusion occurs.

This is what Pope Paul VI recommended in his opening discourse at the Medellin conference: "Talk, speak out, preach, write. Unite in purpose and in program, defend and explain the truths of faith by taking a position on the present validity of the Gospel, on questions dealing with the life of the faithful and the defense of Christian conduct . . ." (Pope Paul's discourse, I).

I too will not grow weary of repeating, as my duty of evangelizing the whole of mankind obliges me to do: "Do not be afraid. Open wide the doors for Christ. To his saving power open the boundaries of states, economic and political systems, the vast fields of culture, civilization and development." (Homily of Pope John Paul II at the solemn inauguration of his pontificate Oct. 22, 1978).

The Truth Concerning the Church's Mission

1.6. You are teachers of the truth, and you are expected to proclaim unceasingly, but with special vigor at this moment, the truth concerning

the mission of the church, object of the creed that we profess, and an indispensable and fundamental area for our fidelity. The church was established by the Lord as a fellowship of life, love and truth (*Lumen Gentium*, 9) and as the body and the sacrament of Christ, in whom the whole fullness of the Godhead dwells (LG, 7).

The church is born of our response in faith to Christ. In fact, it is by sincere acceptance of the good news that we believers gather together in Jesus' name in order to seek together the kingdom, build it up and live it (cf. EN, 13). The church is "the assembly of those who in faith look to Jesus as the cause of salvation and the source of unity and peace" (LG, 9).

But on the other hand we are born of the church. She communicates to us the riches of life and grace entrusted to her. She brings us into existence by baptism, feeds us with the sacraments and the word of God, prepares us for mission, leads us to God's plan, the reason for our existence as Christians. We are her children. With just pride we call her our mother, repeating a title coming down the centuries from the earliest times (cf. Henri de Lubac, *Meditation Sur L'Eglise*).

She must therefore be called upon, respected and served, for "one cannot have God for his Father, if he does not have the church for his mother" (St. Cyprian, *De Unitate* 6,8), one cannot love Christ without loving the church which Christ loves (EN, 16), and "to the extent that one loves the church of Christ, he possesses the Holy Spirit" (St. Augustine, *Tract In Johannem*, 32:8).

Love for the church must be composed of fidelity and trust. Stressing, in the first discourse of my pontificate, my resolve to be faithful to the Second Vatican Council and my desire to dedicate my greatest care to the ecclesiological area, I called on people to take once again into their hands the dogmatic constitution *Lumen Gentium* in order to "meditate with renewed and invigorating zeal on the nature and function of the church, her way of being and acting . . . not merely in order that the vital communion in Christ of all who believe and hope in him should be accomplished, but also in order to contribute to bringing about a fuller and closer unity of the whole human family" (First message of John Paul II to the church and the world, Oct. 17, 1978).

Now at this surpassing moment in the evangelization of Latin America, I repeat the call: "Assent to this document of the council, seen in the light of tradition and embodying the dogmatic formulas issued a century ago by the First Vatican Council, will be for us, pastors and faithful, a clear signpost and urgent incentive for walking—let us repeat—the paths of life and history" (Ibid.).

1.7. There is no guarantee of serious and vigorous evangelizing activity without a well-founded ecclesiology.

The first reason is that evangelization is the essential mission, the distinctive vocation and the deepest identity of the church, which has in turn been evangelized (EN, 14-15; LG, 5). She has been sent by the Lord and in her turn sends evangelizers to preach "not their own selves or their personal ideas, but a Gospel of which neither she nor they are the absolute masters and owners, to dispose of it as they wish" (EN, 15). A second reason is that "evangelization is for no one an individual and isolated act; it is one that is deeply ecclesial" (EN, 60), which is not subject to the discretionary power of individualistic criteria and perspectives but to that of communion with the church and her pastors (cf. *ibid.*).

How could there be authentic evangelizing, if there were no ready and sincere reverence for the sacred magisterium, in clear awareness that by submitting to it the people of God are not accepting the word of men but the true word of God? (cf. I Thes. 2:13; LG, 12). "The 'objective' importance of this magisterium must always be kept in mind and also safeguarded, because of the attacks being leveled nowadays in various quarters against some certain truths of the Catholic faith" (First message of John Paul II to the church and the world, Oct. 17, 1978).

I well know your attachment and availability to the See of Peter and the love that you have always shown it. From my heart I thank you in the Lord's name for the deeply ecclesial attitude implied in this and I wish you yourselves the consolation of counting on the loyal attachment of your faithful.

1.8. In the abundant documentation with which you have prepared this conference, especially in the contributions of many churches, a certain uneasiness is at times noticed with regard to the very interpretation of the nature and mission of the church. Allusion is made, for instance, to the separation that some set up between the church and the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is emptied of its full content and is understood in a rather secularist sense: It is interpreted as being reached not by faith and membership in the church but by the mere changing of structures and social and political involvement, and as being present wherever there is a certain type of involvement and activity for justice. This is to forget that "the church receives the mission to proclaim and to establish among all peoples the kingdom of Christ and of God. She becomes on earth the seed and beginning of that kingdom" (LG, 5).

In one of his beautiful catechetical instructions Pope John Paul I, speaking of the virtue of hope, warned that "it is wrong to state that political, economic and social liberation coincides with salvation in Jesus Christ, that the *regnum dei* (kingdom of God) is identified with the *regnum hominis* (kingdom of man)."

In some cases an attitude of mistrust is produced with regard to the "institutional" or "official" church, which is considered as alienating, as opposed to another church of the people, one "springing from the people" and taking concrete form in the poor.

These positions could contain different, not always easily measured, degrees of familiar ideological forms of conditioning. The council reminded us of the nature and mission of the church. It reminded us how her profound unity and permanent construction are aided by those responsible for the ministry of the community, who count on the collaboration of the whole people of God. In fact, "if the Gospel that we proclaim is seen to be rent by doctrinal disputes, ideological polarizations or mutual condemnations among Christians, at the mercy of the latter's differing views on Christ and the church and even because of their different concepts of society and human institutions, how can those to whom we address our preaching fail to be disturbed, disoriented, even scandalized?" (EN, 77).

The Truth Concerning Man

1.9. The truth that we owe to man is, first and foremost, a truth about man. As witnesses of Jesus Christ we are heralds, spokesmen and servants of this truth. We cannot reduce it to the principles of a system of philosophy or to pure political activity. We cannot forget it or betray it.

Perhaps one of the most obvious weaknesses of present-day civilization lies in an inadequate view of man. Without doubt, our age is the one in which man has been most written and spoken of, the age of the forms of humanism and the age of anthropocentrism. Nevertheless it is, paradoxically, also the age of man's deepest anxiety about his identity and his destiny, the age of man's abasement to previously unsuspected levels, the age of human values trampled on as never before.

How is this paradox explained? We can say that it is the inexorable paradox of atheistic humanism; it is the drama of man being deprived of an essential dimension of his being, namely his search for the infinite, and thus faced with having his being reduced in the worst way. The pastoral constitution *Gaudium et Spes* plumbs the depths of the problem when it says: "Only in the mystery of the incarnate word does the mystery of man take on light" (GS, 22).

Thanks to the Gospel, the church has the truth about man. This truth is found in an anthropology that the church never ceases to fathom more thoroughly and to communicate to others. The primordial affirmation of this anthropology is that man is God's image and cannot be reduced to a mere portion of nature or a nameless element in the human city (cf. GS, 12, 14). This is the meaning of what St. Irenaeus wrote: "Man's glory is God, but the recipient of God's every action, of his

wisdom and of his power is man" (St. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, III, 20, 2-3).

I made particular reference to this irreplaceable foundation of the Christian concept of man in my Christmas message: "Christmas is the feast of man. . . . Man is an object to be counted, something considered under the aspect of quantity. . . . Yet at the same time he is a single being, unique and unrepeatable . . . somebody thought of and chosen from eternity, someone called and identified by his own name" (Christmas Message, 1).

Faced with so many other forms of humanism that are often restricted by a strictly economic, biological or psychological view of man, the church has the right and the duty to proclaim the truth about man that she received from her teacher Jesus Christ. God grant that no external compulsion may prevent her from doing so. God grant, above all, that she may not cease to do so through fear or doubt, through having let herself be contaminated by other forms of humanism or through lack of confidence in her original message.

When a pastor of the church proclaims clearly and unambiguously the truth about man that was revealed by him who "knew what was in man" (Jn. 2:25), he must therefore be encouraged by the certainty of doing the best service to the human being.

This complete truth about the human being constitutes the foundation of the church's social teaching and the basis also of true liberation. In the light of this truth, man is not a being subjected to economic or political processes; these processes are instead directed to man and are subjected to him.

Without doubt, this truth about man that the church teaches will emerge strengthened from this meeting of pastors.

II. SIGNS AND BUILDERS OF UNITY

Your pastoral service of truth is completed by a like service of unity.

II.1. Unity Among Bishops

Unity will be, first of all, unity among yourselves, the bishops. "We must guard and keep this unity," the bishop St. Cyprian wrote in a moment of grave threats to communion between the bishops of his country, "especially we bishops who preside over the church, in order to give witness that the episcopate is one and indivisible. Let no one mislead the faithful or alter the truth. The episcopate is one" (*De Ecclesiae Catholicae Unitate*, 6-8).

This unity of bishops comes not from human calculations and strategy but from on high: from serving one Lord, from being animated by one

Spirit, and from loving one and the same church. It is unity resulting from the mission that Christ has entrusted to us, the mission that has been evolving on the Latin American continent for almost half a millennium and that you are carrying forward with stout hearts in times of profound changes as we approach the close of the second millennium of redemption and of the church's activity. It is unity around the Gospel, the body and blood of the Lamb, and Peter living in his successors, all of which are different signs, but all of them highly important signs, of the presence of Jesus among us.

What an occasion you have, dear brothers, for living this unity of pastors in this conference. In itself it is a sign and result of an already existing unity, but it is also an anticipation and beginning of a unity that must be more and more close and solid. Begin your work in a climate of brotherly unity. Even now let this unity be a component of evangelization.

II.2. Unity with Priests, Religious and Faithful

Let unity among the bishops be extended by unity with priests, religious and faithful. Priests are the immediate collaborators of the bishops in their pastoral mission, and their mission would be compromised if close unity did not reign between priests and bishops.

Men and women religious are also especially important subjects of that unity. I well know the importance of their contribution to evangelization in Latin America in the past and in the present. They came here at the dawn of the discovery and the first steps of almost all the countries. They worked continuously here together with the diocesan clergy. In some countries more than half, in other countries the great majority of the body of priests are religious. This would be enough to show how important it is here more than in other parts of the world for religious not only to accept but to seek loyally an unbreakable unity of aim and action with their bishops. To the bishops the Lord entrusted the mission of feeding the flock. To the religious it belongs to blaze the trails for evangelization. It cannot be, it ought not to be, that the bishops should lack the responsible and active, yet at the same time, docile and trusting collaboration of the religious, whose charism makes them ever more ready agents at the service of the Gospel.

In this matter everybody in the ecclesial community has the duty of avoiding magisteria other than the church's magisterium, for they are ecclesially unacceptable and pastorally sterile.

The laity also are subjects of that unity, whether involved individually or joined in apostolic associations for the spreading of the kingdom of God. It is they who have to consecrate the world to Christ in the midst of their daily duties and in their various family and professional tasks, in close union with and obedience to the lawful pastors.

In line with *Lumen Gentium*, we must safeguard the precious gift of ecclesial unity between all those who form part of the pilgrim people of God.

III. DEFENDERS AND PROMOTERS OF HUMAN DIGNITY

III.1. Those familiar with the church's history know that in all periods there have been admirable bishops deeply involved in advancing and valiantly defending the human dignity of those entrusted to them by the Lord. They have always been impelled to do so by their episcopal mission, because they considered human dignity a gospel value that cannot be despised without greatly offending the creator.

This dignity is infringed on the individual level when due regard is lacking for values such as freedom, the right to profess one's religion, physical and mental integrity, the right to essential goods, to life. . . . It is infringed on the social and political level when man cannot exercise his right of participation, or when he is subjected to unjust and unlawful coercion, or submitted to physical or mental torture, etc.

I am not unaware of how many questions are being posed in this sphere today in Latin America. As bishops, you cannot fail to concern yourselves with them. I know that you propose to carry out a serious reflection on the relationships and implications between evangelization and human advancement or liberation, taking into consideration, in such a vast and important field, what is specific about the church's presence.

Here is where we find, brought concretely into practice, the themes we have touched upon in speaking of the truth concerning Christ, the church and man.

III.2. If the church makes herself present in the defense of or in the advancement of man, she does so in line with her mission, which although it is religious and not social or political, cannot fail to consider man in the entirety of his being. The Lord outlined in the parable of the Good Samaritan the model of attention to all human needs (cf. Lk. 10:29ff.), and he said that in the final analysis he will identify himself with the disinherited—the sick, the imprisoned, the hungry, the lonely—who have been given a helping hand (Mt. 25:31ff).

The church has learned in these and other pages of the Gospel (cf. Mk. 6:35-44) that her evangelizing mission has as an essential part action for justice and the tasks of the advancement of man (cf. Final Document of the Synod of Bishops, Oct. 1971), and that between evangelization and human advancement there are very strong links of the orders of anthropology, theology and love (cf. EN, 31), so that "evangelization would not be complete if it did not take into account the unceasing interplay of the Gospel and of man's concrete life, both personal and social" (EN, 29).

Let us also keep in mind that the church's action in earthly matters such as human advancement, development, justice, the rights of the individual, is always intended to be at the service of man, and of man as she sees him in the Christian vision of the anthropology that she adopts.

She therefore does not need to have recourse to ideological systems in order to love, defend and collaborate in the liberation of man. At the center of the message of which she is the depository and herald she finds inspiration for acting in favor of brotherhood, justice and peace, against all forms of domination, slavery, discrimination, violence, attacks on religious liberty and aggression against man, and whatever attacks life (cf. GS, 26, 27 and 29).

III.3. It is therefore not through opportunism nor thirst for novelty that the church, "the expert in humanity" (Paul VI, address to the United Nations, Oct. 4, 1965), defends human rights. It is through a true evangelical commitment, which, as happened with Christ, is a commitment to the most needy. In fidelity to this commitment, the church wishes to stay free with regard to the competing systems, in order to opt only for man.

Whatever the miseries or sufferings that afflict man, it is not through violence, the interplay of power and political systems, but through the truth concerning man that he journeys toward a better future.

III.4. Hence the church's constant preoccupation with the delicate question of property. A proof of this are the writings of the fathers of the church through the first thousand years of Christianity (cf. St. Ambrose, *De Nabuthae* c. 12, N. 53: Pl. 14, 747). It is clearly shown by the vigorous teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas, repeated so many times. In our own times, the church has appealed to the same principles in such far-reaching documents as the social encyclicals of the recent popes. With special force and profundity, Pope Paul VI spoke of this subject in his encyclical *Populorum Progressio* (cf. Nos. 23-24; cf. also *Mater et Magistra*, 106).

This voice of the church, echoing the voice of human conscience, and which did not cease to make itself heard down through the centuries in the midst of the most varied social and cultural systems and conditions, deserves and needs to be heard in our time also, when the growing wealth of a few runs parallel to the growing poverty of the masses.

It is then that the church's teaching, according to which all private property involves a social obligation, acquires an urgent character. With respect to this teaching, the church has a mission to carry out; she must preach, educate individuals and collectivities, form public opinion, and offer orientations to the leaders of the peoples. In this way she will be working in favor of society, within which this Christian and

evangelical principle will finally bear the fruit of a more just and equitable distribution of goods, not only within each nation but also in the world in general, ensuring that the stronger countries do not use their power to the detriment of the weaker ones.

Those who bear responsibility for the public life of the states and nations will have to understand that internal peace and international peace can only be ensured if a social and economic system based on justice flourishes.

Christ did not remain indifferent in the face of this vast and demanding imperative of social morality. Nor could the church. In the spirit of the church, which is the spirit of Christ, and relying upon her ample and solid doctrine, let us return to work in this field.

It must be emphasized here once more that the church's solicitude looks to the whole man.

For this reason, for an economic system to be just it is an indispensable condition that it should favor the development and diffusion of public education and culture. The more just the economy, the deeper will be the conscience of culture.

This is very much in line with what the council stated: That to attain a life worthy of man, it is not possible to limit oneself to having more; one must aspire to being more (cf. GS, 35).

Therefore, brothers, drink at these authentic fountains. Speak with the language of the council, of John XXIII, of Paul VI: It is the language of the experience, of the suffering, of the hope of modern humanity.

When Paul VI declared that development is "the new name of peace" (*Populorum Progressio*, 76), he had in mind all the links of interdependence that exist not only within the nations but also those outside them, on the world level. He took into consideration the mechanisms that, because they happen to be imbued not with authentic humanism but with materialism, produce on the international level rich people ever more rich at the expense of poor peoples ever more poor.

There is no economic rule capable of changing these mechanisms by itself. It is necessary, in international life, to call upon ethical principles, the demands of justice, the primary commandment which is that of love. Primacy must be given to what is moral, to what is spiritual, to what springs from the full truth concerning man.

I have wished to manifest these reflections to you, which I consider important, although they must not distract you from the central theme of the conference: We shall reach man, we shall reach justice, through evangelization.

III.5. In the face of what has been said hitherto, the church sees with deep sorrow "the sometimes massive increase of human rights violations in all parts of society and of the world. . . . Who can deny that today individual persons and civil powers violate basic rights of the human person with impunity: rights such as the right to be born, the right to life, the right to responsible procreation, to work, to peace, to freedom and social justice, the right to participate in the decisions that affect people and nations? And what can be said when we face the various forms of collective violence like discrimination against individuals and groups, the use of physical and psychological torture perpetrated against prisoners or political dissenters? The list grows when we turn to the instances of the abduction of persons for political reasons and look at the acts of kidnapping for material gain which attack so dramatically family life and the social fabric" (Message of John Paul II to the secretary-general of the United Nations organization on Dec. 2, 1978: 30th anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights). We cry out once more: Respect man. He is the image of God.

Evangelize, so that this may become a reality; so that the Lord may transform hearts and humanize the political and economic systems, with man's responsible commitment as the starting point.

III.6. Pastoral commitments in this field must be encouraged through a correct Christian idea of liberation. The church feels the duty to proclaim the liberation of millions of human beings, the duty to help this liberation become firmly established (cf. EN, 30); but she also feels the corresponding duty to proclaim liberation in its integral and profound meaning, as Jesus proclaimed and realized it (cf. EN, 31). "Liberation from everything that oppresses man but which is above all liberation from sin and the evil one, in the job of knowing God and being known by him" (EN, 9). Liberation made up of reconciliation and forgiveness. Liberation springing from the reality of being children of God, whom we are able to call Abba, Father (Rom. 8:15), a reality which makes us recognize in every man a brother of ours, capable of being transformed in his heart through God's mercy. Liberation that, with the energy of love, urges us toward fellowship, the summit and fullness of which we find in the Lord. Liberation as the overcoming of the various forms of slavery and man-made idols, and as the growth of the new man. Liberation that in the framework of the church's proper mission is not reduced to the simple and narrow economic, political, social or cultural dimension, and is not sacrificed to the demands of any strategy, practice or short-term solution (cf. EN, 33).

To safeguard the originality of Christian liberation and the energies that it is capable of releasing, one must at all costs avoid any form of curtailment or ambiguity, as Pope Paul VI asked: "The church would lose her fundamental meaning. Her message of liberation would no

longer have any originality and would easily be open to monopolization and manipulation by ideological systems and political parties" (EN, 32). There are many signs that help to distinguish when the liberation in question is Christian and when on the other hand it is based rather on ideologies that rob it of consistency with an evangelical view of man, of things and of events (cf. EN, 35). They are signs drawn from the content of what the evangelizers proclaim or form the concrete attitudes that they adopt. At the level of content, one must see what is their fidelity to the word of God, to the church's living tradition and to her magisterium.

As for attitudes, one must consider what sense of communion they have with the bishops, in the first place, and with the other sectors of the people of God; what contribution they make to the real building up of the community, and in what form they lovingly care for the poor, the sick, the dispossessed, the neglected and the oppressed, and in what way they find in them the image of the poor and suffering Jesus, and strive to relieve their need and serve Christ in them (cf. LG, 8). Let us not deceive ourselves. The humble and simple faithful, as though by an evangelical instinct, spontaneously sense when the Gospel is served in the church and when it is emptied of its content and is stifled with other interests.

As you see, the series of observations made by *Evangelii Nuntiandi* on the theme of liberation retains all its validity.

III.7. What we have already recalled constitutes a rich and complex heritage, which *Evangelii Nuntiandi* calls the social doctrine or social teaching of the church (cf. n. 38). This teaching comes into being, in the light of the word of God and the authentic magisterium from the presence of Christians in the midst of the changing situations of the world, in contact with the challenges that result from those situations. This social doctrine involves therefore both principles for reflection and also norms for judgment and guidelines for action (cf. *Octogesima Adveniens*, 4).

Placing responsible confidence in this social doctrine, even though some people seek to sow doubts and lack of confidence in it, to give it serious study, to try to apply it, to be faithful to it—all this is the guarantee, in a member of the church, of his commitment in the delicate and demanding social tasks and of his efforts in favor of the liberation or advancement of his brothers and sisters.

Allow me therefore to recommend to your special pastoral attention the urgent need to make your faithful people aware of this social doctrine of the church.

Particular care must be given to forming a social conscience at all

levels and in all sectors. When injustices worsen and the distance between rich and poor increases distressingly, the social doctrine, in a form which is creative and open to the broad fields of the church's presence, must be a valuable instrument for formation and action. This holds good particularly for the laity: "It is to the laity, though not exclusively to them, that secular duties and activity properly belong" (GS, 43). It is necessary to avoid supplanting the laity and to study seriously just when certain forms of assistance to them retain their reason for existence.

Is it not the laity who are called, by reason of their vocation in the church, to make their contribution in the political and economic dimensions, and to be effectively present in the safeguarding and advancement of human rights?

IV. SOME PRIORITY TASKS

You are going to consider many pastoral themes of great significance. Time prevents me from mentioning them. Some I have referred to or will do so in the meetings with the priests, religious, seminarians and lay people.

IV.1. The themes that I indicate here have, for different reasons, great importance. You will not fail to consider them, among the many others that your pastoral farsightedness will indicate to you.

A) The family: Make every effort to ensure that there is pastoral care for the family. Attend to this field of such primary importance in the certainty that evangelization in the future depends largely on the "domestic church." It is the school of love, of the knowledge of God, of respect for life and for human dignity. The importance of this pastoral care is in proportion to the threats aimed at the family. Think of the campaigns in favor of divorce, of the use of contraceptive practices, and of abortion, which destroy society.

B) Priestly and religious vocations: In the majority of your countries, in spite of an encouraging awakening of vocations, the lack of vocations is a grave and chronic problem; there is a huge disproportion between the growing population and the number of agents of evangelization. This is of great importance to the Christian community. Every community has to obtain its vocations, as a sign of its vitality and maturity.

Intense pastoral activity must be reactivated, starting with the Christian vocation in general and from enthusiastic pastoral care for youth, so as to give the church the ministers she needs. Lay vocations, although they are so indispensable, cannot compensate for them. Furthermore, one of the proofs of the laity's commitment is an abundance of vocations to the consecrated life.

C) *Youth*: How much hope the church places in youth! How much energy needed by the church abounds in youth in Latin America! How close we pastors must be to the young, so that Christ and the church and love of the brethren may penetrate deeply into their hearts.

CONCLUSION

At the end of this message I cannot fail to invoke once again the protection of the mother of God upon your persons and your work during these days. The fact that this meeting of ours is taking place in the spiritual presence of Our Lady of Guadalupe, who is venerated in Mexico and in all the other countries as the mother of the church in Latin America, is for me a cause for joy and a source of hope. May she, the "star of evangelization," be your guide in your future reflections and decisions. May she obtain for you from her divine son:

—The boldness of prophets and the evangelical prudence of pastors.

—The clear-sightedness of teachers and the reliability of guides and directors.

—Courage as witnesses, and the calmness, patience and gentleness of fathers.

May the Lord bless your labors.

You are accompanied by select representatives: priests, deacons, men and women religious, lay people, experts and observers, whose collaboration will be very useful to you. The whole church has its eyes on you, with confidence and hope. You intend to respond to these expectations with full fidelity to Christ, the church and humanity. The future is in God's hands, but in a certain way God places that future with new evangelizing momentum in your hands, too. "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Mt. 28:19).

Rights of the Rural Poor

Address to Indian Peasant Farmers
in mountain village of Cuilapan, Oaxaca, Mexico

January 29, 1979

Dear beloved brothers,

I greet you with joy and I am grateful for your enthusiastic presence and the words of welcome that you have directed to me. I do not find a better way of expressing the feelings that fill my heart than the words of St. Peter, the first pope of the church: "Peace to you who are in Christ." Peace to you who form such a numerous group.

Also you, residents of Oaxaca, of Chiapas, of Cuilapan and all those who come from so many other parts, heirs of the blood and the culture of your noble ancestors—in particular the Mixtecs and Zapotecs—you were "called to be saints, with all those who invoke the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1:2).

The Son of God "has come among us to make sons of God those who believe in his name" (Jn. 1:11). And he entrusted to the church the continuation of his mission of salvation wherever there are men. It should not seem strange, then, that one day in the distant 16th century, there arrived here, because of their fidelity to the church, courageous missionaries, eager to assimilate your customs and way of life to better reveal and give living expression of the image of Christ. Our grateful memory goes to the first bishop of Oaxaca—Juan Jose Lopez de Zarate and so many other missionaries—Franciscans, Dominicans, Augustinians and Jesuits—admirable men for their faith and their human generosity.

They knew very well the importance of culture as a vehicle to transmit the faith, so that men may progress in their knowledge of God. In this there can be no distinctions of races nor of cultures. "There is no Greek nor Jew, nor slave nor free man, there is only Christ in all" (cf. Col. 3:9-11).

This constitutes a challenge and a stimulus for the church, because, being faithful to the genuine and total message of the Lord, it is necessary for the church to open and to interpret all human reality in order to impregnate it with the strength of the Gospel. (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, nn. 20,40).

Dearly beloved brothers: My presence among you is intended to be a living and authentic sign of this universal concern of the church. The pope and the church are with you and love you; love yourselves, your

culture, your traditions; admire your marvelous past, encourage you in the present and expect much of you in the future.

But not only of this do I wish to speak to you.

Through you, farmers and Indians, there appears before my eyes this immense crowd of the world of agriculture, still the prevalent part of the Latin American continent and a very large part, still, of our planet.

Before this impressive spectacle that is reflected in my eyes, I cannot help but think of the same picture which 10 years ago my predecessor, Paul VI, contemplated in his memorable visit to Colombia and most particularly in his meeting with rural workers.

With him, I want to repeat—and if it is possible, in an even stronger voice—that the current pope wants to be “linked to your cause, the cause of the poor countries, of the poor people” (Speech to farm workers, Aug. 23, 1968); that the pope is with this mass of the population, “almost always abandoned in an ignoble level of life and at times treated and exploited harshly” (Ibidem).

Taking the line of my predecessors, John XXIII and Paul VI, as well as the council (cf. *Mater et Magistra, Populorum Progressio, Gaudium et Spes*, 9, 71, etc.) and in view of a situation which continues to be alarming, not often better and sometimes worse, the pope wants to be your voice, the voice of those who cannot speak or who are silenced, to be the conscience of the consciences, the invitation to action in order to make up for lost time, a time that is frequently one of prolonged suffering and of unfulfilled hopes.

In the deprived world of the rural areas the worker, who by the sweat of his brow waters his affliction, cannot hope for more than that his dignity, which is not inferior to any other social class, is recognized fully and effectively.

He has the right to be respected, not to be deprived—through manipulations that at times amount to real thefts—of the little that he has; the right for his aspirations to play a part in his own promotion and not be blocked.

He has the right for the barriers of exploitation to be destroyed, barriers which frequently are made of intolerable selfishness, against which the best efforts of self-improvement usually clash. He has the right to effective help—which is neither charity nor the crumbs of justice—so that he may have access to the development to which his human dignity and status as a son of God give him a right.

Therefore, it is necessary to act quickly and with intensity. It is necessary to effect bold transformations, which are profoundly innovative. It is

necessary to initiate, without delay, urgent agricultural reforms (*Populorum Progressio*, 32).

It cannot be forgotten that adequate means must be used. The church does defend the legitimate right to private property, but it teaches with no less clarity that, above all, private property always carries with it a social obligation, so that material possessions may serve the general goal that God intended. And if the common good requires it, there must be no doubt about expropriation itself, carried out in the proper manner (*Populorum Progressio*, 24).

The agricultural world has great importance and great dignity; it is that which offers society the products necessary for its nourishment. It is work that deserves the appreciation and grateful esteem of all, a recognition of the dignity of those who work the land.

It is a dignity that can and must be increased in the contemplation of a God who is found in contact with nature, in reflection of the divine action, who takes care of the grass of the field, makes it grow, nourishes it, nurtures the land, sending the rain and the wind, so that it gives food, too, to animals who help man, as we read in the opening chapters of Genesis.

The work of the land involves no small hardship because of the effort it requires, because of the disparagement with which at times it is viewed, or because of the obstacles that are encountered and which only long-range action can resolve. Without this, the flight from the rural areas to the cities will continue, frequently creating problems of extended and painful unemployment and overcrowding of people in housing unworthy of human habitation, etc.

One bad thing, which is fairly widespread, is the tendency among the rural workers to be individualistic when it would be more helpful to act in a more coordinated and cooperative way. Think about this, dear sons.

In spite of all that, the rural world possesses enviable human and religious richness: a deep love of family, a sense of friendship, help to the needy, deep humanism, love of peace and community, religious awareness, confidence and openness with God, cultivation of the love of the Virgin Mary and many other virtues.

It is a deserving tribute of recognition that the pope wishes to express to you and which society owes you. Thank you, farmers, for your valuable contribution to the welfare of society. Humanity owes you much. You can feel proud of your contributions to the common good.

For those of you who are responsible for the welfare of nations, powerful classes which at times keep the land unproductive and hide the bread which so many families lack: Human conscience, the conscience

of the nations, the cry of the deprived and above all the voice of God, the voice of the church, repeats with me: It is not just, it is not human, it is not Christian for certain clearly unjust situations to continue. It is necessary to put into practice methods which are realistic and effective at the local, national and international levels, in the broad line set forth in the encyclical *Mater et Magistra*. And it is clear that those who should collaborate most in this area are those who are most able.

Beloved brothers and sons: Work to improve your human life. But don't stop there. Make yourselves ever more worthy morally and religiously. Do not harbor feelings of hate or of violence, but rather gaze toward the Lord of all, who to each one gives the reward which his acts deserve. The church is with you and encourages you to live as sons of God, united to Christ, under the gaze of our Blessed Mother.

The pope asks your prayers and offers you his. And as he blesses you and your families, he takes leave of you with the words of the apostle St. Paul: "Take a greeting to all your brothers with a sacred kiss." May this be a call of hope. So be it.

The Rights of Migrant Workers

*Address given in Monterrey
during last stop in Mexico*

January 31, 1979

Dear brothers, sisters, peasants, employees and especially workers of Monterrey,

Thanks for all the things I see and hear, many thanks to each and every one of you.

I appreciate this warm and cordial welcome in your industrial city of Monterrey. It is the center of your existence, of your work to earn the daily bread for your children and for yourselves. This is a witness to your sufferings and aspirations. It is the result of your work, the work of your mind and hands and in that sense, the city is a symbol of your pride as workers and a sign of hope for renewed progress and an increasingly more human life.

I am happy to be among you as your brother and your friend, as a co-worker in this city of Monterrey which is to Mexico what Nova Huta is to my dear and far away Cracow. I cannot forget the difficult moments during the world war when I had the direct experience of physical work, as you do, of the fatigue, the dependence it imposes, the stress and monotony of it.

I have shared the needs of the working men and women, their just demands and legitimate aspirations. I know very well the need for work that suits the lofty dignity of man and is not a cause for alienation and frustration. I can testify to one thing: In their moments of harsh trial, my people in Poland found in their faith in God, their trust in the Virgin Mary, and in the church community united with its pastors, a light stronger than the surrounding darkness and an unconquerable hope.

I well know that I am talking to workers who are aware of their profession as Christians, who therefore want to live according to this profession with all their dedication, all the consequences. For this reason the pope wishes to bring to you some points for reflection concerning your dignity as people, as children of God. From such a noble fountain springs forth the enlightenment you need to guide your personal and social life.

Truly, if the spirit of Christ lives within us, we must feel a fundamental concern for those who have no adequate food, clothing, housing, schooling or the benefits of culture.

Because work is the source of sustenance, it means cooperation with

God in perfecting created nature, and is as well a service to our neighbors that enhances man.

Christians cannot ignore the problem of unemployment of so many women and men, particularly the young and the heads of families, subject by their lack of employment to discouragement and despair.

The fortunate ones who have work aspire to more human conditions, to greater security, to a fairer participation in the fruits of their common labor regarding wages, social security and opportunities for cultural and spiritual growth. They want to be treated as free and responsible men and women, able to participate in the decisions which affect their life and their future.

It is a fundamental right of workers to freely establish organizations to defend and promote their interests and to contribute in a responsible manner to the common good.

This task, in itself immense and complex, is further complicated by the world economic crisis, by the (international) disorder brought about by unjust trade and financial practices, by the exhaustion of some natural resources and by the risks of irreversible pollution of the environment.

In order to truly participate in the efforts toward solidarity by humankind, Latin America is demanding with good reason that responsible control over the resources that nature gave this area, be returned to its people. Latin Americans also demand those general conditions which will allow them to carry out their development according to their own spirit (or self-determination), in which all the human groups within their society will have a share.

There is urgent need to take bold and renewing measures to correct the injustices inherited from the past and to meet the challenge of the amazing transformation in humankind—measures to be taken at all levels, national and international, and involving all social groups in all (political) systems.

New realities demand new attitudes. Mere unilateral denunciation of injustices seems ever more an easy pretext of alien ideologies, whatever they are.

If humankind wants to get hold of a revolution which is getting out of hand, if humankind wants to overcome the temptation of the wave of materialism which gains ground as if in flight; if it wants to ensure true development of individuals and peoples, then it must revise in a radical form the concept of progress which under various names has left spiritual values behind.

The church offers its help. On the one hand, she is not afraid to

vigorously denounce all attacks against human dignity. But it rather saves its essential energies to help develop among individuals and groups—employers, workers—an awareness of the great resources of goodness they carry within, a goodness that already yielded fruit in the past and must yield new fruit now.

The workers' movement, to which the church and Christian leaders have contributed in diverse and original ways, especially on this continent, claims its fair responsibility in building a new world order.

This movement has gathered the common aspirations to freedom and dignity, and has fostered the values of solidarity, brotherhood and friendship through sharing experiences.

Again, the movement has fostered original means of organization and has improved substantially the lot of the worker. It has left the imprint of a valued contribution, although this is seldom recognized, in the industrial world.

Drawing from this past, it must commit this experience to the search for new approaches, it must effect self-renewal, and it must decisively contribute to building the future of Latin America.

Some 10 years ago my predecessor Pope Paul VI came to Colombia. He wanted to bring to the people of Latin America the comfort of the common father. He also wanted to open the richness of the church in this continent to the universal church.

Some years later, when celebrating the 80th anniversary of the social encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, he wrote:

"It is with all its dynamism that the social teaching of the church accompanies men in their search. If it does not intervene to authenticate a given structure or to propose a ready-made model, it does not thereby limit itself to recalling general principles. It develops through reflection applied to the changing situations of this world, under the driving force of the Gospel as the source of renewal when its message is accepted in its totality and with all its demands. It also develops with the sensitivity proper to the church which is characterized by a disinterested will to serve and by attention to the poorest.

"Finally, it draws upon its rich experience of many centuries which enables it, while continuing its permanent preoccupations, to undertake the daring and creative innovations which the present state of the world requires."

Dear friends: In fidelity to these principles the church wants to call attention to a very grave, current situation: the problem of emigrants. We cannot ignore the condition of millions of people who, in search of work and their own bread, must leave their homeland, often their family,

to face the hardships of new surroundings which are not always pleasant or welcoming—to face an unfamiliar language and general conditions which bring loneliness and discrimination to them, to their wives and their families.

It happens that some people take advantage of them by offering lower wages, cutting social security benefits and other social aid, and by providing housing unsuited to human dignity. Again, it is often felt that first the greatest yield must be wrested from the migrant worker without regard for the human person in him.

The church continues to teach that the approach to take in this and similar fields, is that economic, social and political interests not be placed above man. Rather the dignity of the human person must prevail above all other things, which in turn must be subservient to man.

We would regard the world as rather inhospitable if it only sought to have more, leaving aside the consideration that the worker as a person, a human being, a child of God, and therefore one called to eternal vocation, must be helped to be more.

On the other hand, certainly the worker has obligations to fulfill in all loyalty for without this there cannot be a right social order.

I am addressing public powers, industrialists, workers, to invite them with all my might to study and mediate on these principles and draw from them the proper lines of action. There are examples—we recognize this fact—which show that the principles of the church's social doctrine are being implemented. I am pleased and I have words of praise for those responsible. I also wish to encourage others to imitate their good example, for the cause of coexistence and brotherhood among social groups as well as among nations will gain. Even the economy will profit, although the human cause is our main concern.

Let us not remain on the purely human level, however. The pope brings to you another message, a message for you, workers of Mexico and Latin America: Open your hearts to God, for God loves you, Jesus Christ loves you. The mother of God, the Virgin Mary, loves you. The church, the pope loves you, the pope who invites you to join the engulfing force of love that overcomes all and builds all. When some 2,000 years ago God sent his Son, he did not wait for human efforts to eliminate all kinds of injustice. Jesus came and began to share our human condition, its sufferings and difficulties, even death, before transforming the daily life of the people. He talked to the masses of the poor, to liberate them from sin, to open their eyes to a horizon of enlightenment and fill them with joy and hope.

He does the same today. Christ is present in your church, in your homes, in your hearts, in your life. Open the doors to him, let us cele-

brate together on this joyful occasion, the love of Jesus and the love of his mother! Nobody must feel excluded, particularly those who suffer the most, because this is a joy that comes from Jesus Christ, that cannot be insulting for any adversity, because it has the feeling and the warmth of friendship, offered by he who suffered more than anyone else, who died on the cross for us, who is preparing for us a place in his eternal abode next to him, and who in this life proclaims and reaffirms our dignity as human beings.

I am among friends, workers. I would stay longer, but I must end. To you present here, to all the workers of Mexico, to all your countrymen who work beyond the borders of the fatherland, to all the workers of Latin America I give my greetings as a friend, my blessing, my memories. To all, your children and families, my friendly embrace.

