



The Holy See

JOHN PAUL II

GENERAL AUDIENCE

Wednesday, 11 July 1979

1. Today, too, I wish to refer to the great solemnity that the Roman Church celebrates on 29 June, recalling in this way every year the martyrdom of her Patron Saints, the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul. The *commemoration* of these Apostles sets before our soul's eyes not only the moment of their death for Christ, but also *their whole apostolic life*. Although so remote in time, their lives, rich in the labour of evangelical witness, spent entirely in laying the foundations of the Kingdom of God on earth, are always concrete and of topical interest for us. Both Apostles take shape before the eyes of our mind as real figures; they express themselves with the words of their Letters and with their works, recorded both in their writings and in the Acts of the Apostles. We can follow the events in which they took part and of which their lives were composed, in a certain sense, from outside and, at the same time, we can follow also *their interior lives*, always finding in them a living model of that "sequela Christi", to which we are all called.

I would like to draw your attention today to one particular: *the Apostles had numerous helpers and collaborators*, who made possible and facilitated for them the accomplishment of the tasks connected with the proclamation of the Gospel. Many names of these disciples and apostolic helpers are known to us, especially from the letters of St Paul. The commemoration of some of them is preserved in the martyrology or in the liturgical calendar of the saints of the Church.

2. This fact, which concerns the origins of the Church, enables us to cover nearly two thousand years of history, arriving at our own times. The *fulfilment* of the apostolic mission, and *of Peter's ministry especially*, has required numerous collaborators in every age. Our age, too, requires them, to an extent adequate to the needs of our times, in which it is incumbent on the Church to carry out the evangelical mission of salvation. I wish to speak today, on the occasion of the meeting with you participants in the Wednesday audience, precisely about all those who

collaborate with Peter's Successor in Rome in the Roman and Universal Church. I do so *for theological reasons*: the recent solemnity of the Holy Apostles, in fact, prepares us for such reflection. I do so also *for personal reasons*: it is only right that I should express remembrance and gratitude to my collaborators, as we read in the letters of the Apostles and especially in St Paul's letters. "We give thanks to God always for you all, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labour of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess 1:2-3).

3. The circle of the closest collaborators of the Pope, Bishop of Rome and Successor of Peter, is constituted by the *Roman Curia*. As is known, it is at present a large and differentiated organism, on the updating of which, according to the tasks of Peter's ministry and according to the needs of the modern Church, the Second Vatican Council reflected deeply. Among its main suggestions in this field we read: "It is the earnest desire of the Fathers of the sacred Council that these departments, which have indeed rendered excellent service to the Roman Pontiff and to the pastors of the Church, should be reorganized and modernized, should be more in keeping with different regions, and rites, especially in regard to their number, their names, their competence, their procedures and methods of coordination... Furthermore, as these departments have been instituted for the good of the universal Church it is hoped that their members, officials and consultants, as well as the legates of the Roman Pontiff, may be chosen, as far as it is possible, on a more representative basis, so that the offices or central agencies of the Church may have a truly universal spirit. It is urged also that more bishops, especially diocesan bishops, be co-opted to membership of these departments, who will be better able to inform the Supreme Pontiff on the thinking, the hopes and the needs of all the churches. Finally, the Fathers of the Council judge that it would be most advantageous if these departments were to have more frequent recourse to the advice of lay people of virtue, knowledge and experience, so that they also may have an appropriate role in the affairs of the Church" (*Christ Dominus*, n. 9 and 10).

Following the thought of the Council and in obedience to its indications, *Paul VI* gave concrete form to the updating of the Roman Curia, by means of the Constitution *Regimini Ecclesiae Universae*. This large and differentiated organism gathers within it offices and institutions with a long and sometimes centuries-old history, and alongside them, *new organisms*, which emerged directly from the ecclesiology of Vatican II, and which manifest that awareness of the Church's mission in the modern world that we owe precisely to the Council.

It would be impossible to make a detailed analysis of the whole complex of the Curia here. It would certainly be laborious to list in order the spheres of competence of the individual departments and the various offices, as well as their structure and internal organization; but this is perhaps not necessary. It is opportune rather to refer briefly to each of the departments in order to realize how each one corresponds to a definite field of the life and activity of the universal Church, and how it facilitates, in this sector, the carrying out of Peter's ministry before the Church, sharing in a deep and competent way the magisterial and pastoral concern of each Successor of St Peter, Bishop of

Rome.

The names themselves of the single departments express their spheres of competence. The task of the Bishop of Rome is, in the first place, concern for the integrity of the *doctrine of the faith*: and here we have the Congregation bearing precisely this name, which helps him in all that. Questions regarding *the apostolic succession of the Bishops* in the dimension of the whole College are incumbent on the Bishop of Rome: hence the Congregation for Bishops. Then there follow all the other departments, which deal with the single tasks of Peter's ministry in the Church: the Congregation for the Eastern Churches which, though with different Rites, are in communion with Peter's See; the Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship, in charge of the sacramental and liturgical life of the Church; the Congregation for the Clergy, responsible for things regarding the ministry and life of Priests; the Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes, which have such an important part in the living tissue of the Christian community; the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, in charge of everything concerning missionary action; the Congregation for the Causes of Saints; and finally the Congregation for Catholic education, the activity of which regards Catholic schools, seminaries and universities scattered all over the world. Then there are the Organisms for the administration of justice, that is, the Sacred Roman Rota and the Supreme Court of the Apostolic Signatura—as well as, for internal questions of conscience, the Sacred Apostolic Penitentiary—which endeavour to find a just solution to questions that may arise in the life of the Church and that concern the rights of the faithful or of communities.

There is, furthermore, as you well know, the Secretariat of State which assists the Pope from close at hand both in matters that regard the universal Church and for the coordination of the activity of Curial Organisms. There is, moreover, the Council for the Public Affairs of the Church, which deals above all with questions concerning relations with States and with Governments

The Church is like that man "*who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old*" (Mt 13. 52). Those Organisms that arose as a result of the Council tell us a great deal about the Church of today and tomorrow: the Pontifical Council for the Laity, the Commission "*Iustitia et Pax*", the three Secretariats, for the Union of Christians, for Non-Christian Religions, for Non-Believers; various Pontifical Commissions and the Prefecture for Economic Affairs. Without mentioning, furthermore, the Synod of Bishops, which also came into being as a result of the Council, and which has its General Secretariat at this Apostolic See.

4. The Apostolic See can, and should, be regarded as a complex of specialized offices, which by means of their tireless work facilitate knowledge of the essential affairs of the Church and the opportune decisions. It can and must be said that *all these offices support the "ministry" of Peter's Successor* and facilitate its accomplishment.

However, speaking of "ministry", it is always necessary to perceive that undercurrent which gives

each of them a rightful meaning and causes *the life of the whole Church to throb in each one*, by means of all the impulses which arrive from all sides and then branch out in all directions.

Perhaps, precisely for this purpose, the best thing is to go back to the times of the first Apostles, to their Letters. With the same words that they wrote about their closest collaborators, allow me to *express my gratitude* to my present collaborators, uniting with them in solicitude for the Church which has her source in the heart of Christ the Good Shepherd.

To various groups:

I wish to greet with particular goodwill the large numbers of men and women religious of the Order of St Augustine, coming from various parts of the world, who are taking part in Rome these days in a course of Augustinian spirituality, on the subject: "The Augustinian experience in search of God".

I wish from the bottom of my heart that study of the rich, fruitful and ever relevant teaching of your great Father and Founder will yield the desired interior fruits of joyful communion with God, continual prayer, and multiform charity, which are at the basis of your lives as consecrated souls and of your apostolate in the Church.

May St Augustine assist you from heaven, and may my blessing accompany you.

To the young people:

Beloved young people! As always, I wish to reserve a special greeting for you. In particular I bid a hearty welcome to the young people belonging to the European Movement "GEN" of the Focolarini, present here in large numbers. You, beloved in Christ, need truth, love, and examples to imitate. Well, look upwards, as St Benedict did, whose liturgical feast falls today; look up to Jesus and to those who really know him, love him and follow him! Look to Jesus who is Truth, Love, the Example that illuminates, attracts and convinces! Every aspiration of yours is satisfied in him! May my blessing help you.

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