



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO CANADA

(SEPTEMBER 9-20, 1984) **CELEBRATION OF THE EUCHARIST HOMILY OF POPE JOHN PAUL II** "Bird's Hill"
Parc (Winnipeg)

Sunday, 16 September 1984 "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,

*and with all your soul, and with all your might" (Deut. 6, 5). Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,***1.** This commandment, the greatest one, was proclaimed in the Old Testament to Israel alone. It was the first and the greatest commandment of the Old Covenant that God made with the Chosen People. He gave it through Moses after the liberation from slavery in Egypt. The Covenant, which was linked to the commandments, placed on all Israelites the obligations inherent in belonging to the People of God. The first reading of today's liturgy speaks to us in a very detailed way of how the Israelites were to know and put into practice "the commandments, the statutes and the ordinances" (*Deut. 6, 1*) which God had taught through Moses. The Israelites were to pass them on and teach them to their children and to all the generations to come, both during the journey towards the Promised Land and when they would be living there. "You shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates" (*Ibid. 6, 8-9*). The Covenant with God became a fundamental source of the spiritual identity of Israel as a nation among the other peoples and nations of the earth.**2.** The second reading, from Saint Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians, introduces us into the dimension of the New Covenant is new and everlasting. It was brought about in the flesh and blood of Christ, by his death on the Cross and by the Resurrection, and it is universal. It is open to all the peoples and nations of the earth. For the Apostles have been sent to everyone to proclaim the Gospel: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (*Matth. 28, 19*). Saint Paul can therefore write to the Thessalonians saying: "It was God who decided that we were fit to be entrusted with the Good News, and when we are speaking, we are not trying to please men but God, who can read our inmost thoughts . . . We felt so devoted and protective toward you, and had come to love you so much, that we were eager to hand over to you not only the Good News but our whole lives as well" (*1 Thess. 2, 4, 8*). The Gospel has become - and always continues to become - the source of spiritual culture for men and women of different nations, tongues and races. It has also become the basis of the individuality and cultural identity of many peoples and nations throughout the world. This statement takes on singular eloquence in Canada, where, through immigration, a varied inheritance of peoples, nations and cultures becomes the common good of the whole of society.**3.** God's commandment to Israel expresses the good of society. Its fulfilment is the condition on which all cultural identity is consolidated, and without which there can be no lasting and effective multicultural community. God's word expressed through Moses brings with it a promise and constitutes a charter of hope for all society: "If you keep all his laws and commandments which I lay on you, you will have a long life . . . Listen then, Israel, and keep and observe what will make you prosper and give you great increase" (*Deut. 6, 2-3*). It is in the perspective of faith that we perceive how much the

Word of God - brought to fulfilment in the Gospel - contributes to the building and preservation of cultures. And we see how necessary it is to fulfil the Gospel message in order to succeed in harmonizing cultures in a pluralistic unity. To detach culture from its link to the Gospel commandment of love would be to make impossible the multicultural interplay which is characteristic of Canada. The Church speaks to us repeatedly of the need to evangelize in depth man's culture and cultures, "always taking the person as one's starting-point and always coming back to the relationships of people among themselves and with God" (Pauli VI, *Evangeli Nuntiandi*, 20). At the same time we are alerted that "the split between the Gospel and culture is without a doubt the drama of our time" (*Ibid.*). The historical experience of the two founding peoples of Canada who bound themselves to live in mutual respect for the unique cultural identity of each other has providentially created that atmosphere of respect for cultural diversity which characterizes Canada today. In her own multicultural interaction, Canada not only offers to the world a creative vision of society but she also has a splendid opportunity to show consistency between what she believes and what she does. And this is accomplished by applying Christ's commandment of love.⁴ Manitoba itself truly reflects a variety of many different cultures. Besides its population of British origin and French origin - in addition to native peoples - so many other Western countries are represented here. Immigration from Western and Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa and South America contributes to making up the reality of this civil society. Latin and Ukrainian ecclesial jurisdictions compose one Catholic Church. Today I greet in a special way the Church of Winnipeg with its pastor, Archbishop Exner; the Archdiocese of Winnipeg of the Ukrainians led by Archbishop Hermaniuk; and the faithful of the Archdiocese of Saint Boniface under the pastoral leadership of Archbishop Hacault. My greetings to the diocesan delegations of the faithful from Saskatchewan, also Bishop Charles Halpin of Regina, and the bishops from surrounding dioceses of Prince Albert, Saskatoon, and Gravelbourg. I acknowledge with gratitude the presence of the high civil officials including former Governor-General of Canada, the Honourable Albert Schwier, Lt Governor and Premier of Manitoba, and the Governor of Saskatchewan. Yes, you come from almost "every tribe and tongue, people and nation" (*Apoc.* 5, 9). And this is expressed in our liturgical assembly today, not only through different languages but also through the different liturgical traditions of Christianity, both in the West and the East. In this Eucharist the Church in Canada celebrates her diversity and proclaims the unity in Christ and in the universal Church.⁵ Against the broad background of history and culture, the first and most important commandment which Moses transmitted to the one Chosen People of the Old Covenant takes on a fresh eloquence in our times. Jesus Christ says: "This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you" (*Jo.* 15, 12). The commandment of love is rooted, in a new way, in love of God: "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love" (*Ibid.* 15, 9-10). Therefore, love of God above all things is a sharing in Christ's love - the love whereby Christ loves. And at the same time: love of God is organically linked with love for others - with mutual love. This love makes us Christ's friends. "I shall not call you servants any-more . . . I call you friends" (*Ibid.* 15, 15). This love is a moral and existential expression of the election and calling by Christ "to go out and to bear fruit, fruit that will last; and then the Father will give you anything you ask him in my name" (*Ibid.* 15, 16).⁶ Le pluralisme des traditions, le pluralisme des cultures, le pluralisme des histoires, le pluralisme des identités nationales - tout cela est compatible avec l'unité de la société. Aujourd'hui nous prions pour l'unité morale de cette société, le dénominateur commun de toutes les "nécessités du monde". Depuis les époques les plus anciennes, le christianisme a éduqué les fidèles - témoins du Christ - à avoir le sens des responsabilités envers le bien commun de la société. Ceci reste tout aussi vrai quand la société présente nettement un caractère pluraliste. L'importance de l'enseignement de l'Eglise à cet égard a été exprimée par le Second Concile du Vatican en des termes perspicaces: "Que l'on ne crée donc pas d'opposition artificielle entre les activités professionnelles et sociales d'une part, la vie religieuse d'autre part. En manquant à ses obligations terrestres, le chrétien

manque à ses obligations envers le prochain, bien plus envers Dieu lui-même, et il met en danger son salut éternel” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 43). A la source de cet enseignement se trouve le commandement de l’amour mutuel dont parle l’Evangile d’aujourd’hui. L’amour mutuel, cela veut dire, dans sa dimension essentielle, que les relations entre les personnes humaines sont fondées sur le respect de la dignité personnelle de l’autre et sur une attention effective à son bien. L’amour mutuel a une importance particulière pour la formation de la communauté du mariage et de la famille. Et cet amour mutuel s’étend à de nombreux cercles et à différents niveaux de la coexistence humaine: au sein de divers milieux, communautés, sociétés, et même entre les sociétés. En ce sens, cet amour est “social”, et constitue la condition essentielle pour la formation de la civilisation de l’amour proclamée par l’Eglise, et spécialement par Paul VI.⁷ Dans ce grand pays du Canada, l’amour mutuel entre toutes les communautés différentes qui constituent cette société pluraliste marquée par la multiplicité des cultures devient une force immense de bien. L’amour mutuel qui élève et unit les éléments individuels leur permet à tous, quand ils sont ensemble, d’être des instruments particulièrement efficaces au service de l’humanité. L’amour donne la possibilité à des personnes aux talents très variés de s’unir pour accomplir une action cohérente. Par cette action cohérente, une société aux cultures multiples devient capable de mettre à la disposition des autres tous les dons dont elle a été largement comblée. Rappelle-toi, ô Canada, que la plus grande richesse reçue de la diversité de tes cultures te permet de donner aux autres et de les aider, d’aider tes frères et sœurs dans le besoin. C’est ce que la foi rend possible; c’est ce qu’exige l’amour. Au nom de l’amour, je demande instamment que la disponibilité manifestée à tant d’immigrants et de réfugiés des minorités ethniques et l’accueil généreux qui leur a été réservé continuent à caractériser le Canada et à être sa richesse, à l’avenir comme dans le passé. In this regard it is worthwhile to recall those prophetic words of John XXIII: "The best interests of justice are served by those public authorities who do all they can to improve the human conditions of the members of ethnic minorities, especially in what concerns their language, culture, customs, and their economic activity and enterprises" (Ioannis XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*: AAS 55 (1963) 283). This contribution of public authority must be coupled by the active efforts of all individuals and groups to continue to build a socially just Canadian society - a lasting civilization of love in which are ensured "the priority of ethics over technology, the primacy of the person over things, and the superiority of spirit over matter" (Ioannis Pauli PP. II, *Redemptor Hominis*, 16)- and all this for the glory of God, who is the Father of us all. Let us pray for this intention, especially in this Eucharistic assembly, and through this prayer let us unite ourselves with Christ. Truly, we wish to accept his invitation: "Remain in my love". Amen. © Copyright 1984 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana