



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO CANADA

(SEPTEMBER 9-20, 1984) CONCELEBRATION OF THE HOLY MASS HOMILY OF POPE JOHN PAUL

//Edmonton Airport

*Monday, 17 September 1984 "I will hear what the Lord God has to say,
a voice that speaks of peace.*

*Mercy and faithfulness have met;
justice and peace have embraced"*

(Ps. 85 (84), 8. 10). Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,**1.** These are words of today's liturgy, taken from the Responsorial Psalm. The God of the Covenant is a God of peace. Peace on earth is a good that belongs to his Kingdom and to his salvation. This good is obtained in justice and faithfulness to the divine commandments. This good, which is peace, is promised to us in different spheres: as the interior good of our conscience, as the good of our human living together, and finally as a social and international good. This last meaning was above all what Paul VI had in mind when he wrote these memorable words: "The new name for peace is development". And he wrote these words in the Encyclical "*Populorum Progressio*".**2.** Today we come together here in Edmonton to make this theme of the development or progress of peoples the principal object of our meditations and prayers in the Eucharistic Sacrifice. In this Eucharistic community is gathered first of all the whole Church of the Archdiocese of Edmonton. And I wish indeed to greet this Church with its Pastor, Archbishop MacNeil, as well as the Eparchy of Edmonton of the Ukrainians together with Bishop Savaryn and Bishop Greschuk. I also acknowledge with deep gratitude the presence of the large group of faithful from Saskatchewan, who have brought their crosses to be blessed. I likewise embrace in the love of Christ Jesus our Lord all the pilgrims and visitors. The refugees from Central America, Southeast Asia and Eastern Europe have a special place in my heart. I wish to greet all those who have come from other Dioceses of Alberta, from Grouard-McLennan, Calgary and St. Paul; also from British Columbia and the Northwest Territory, as well as visitors from the United States. Likewise I greet each ethnic and cultural group including the German-speaking Ukrainians, Italians, Portuguese, Spanish, Lithuanian, Slovak, Bohemian, Croatian, Hungarian, Polish, Filipinos, Chinese, Koreans and Vietnamese. To all of you who are here today, grace and peace in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Saviour of the world. Considering our theme, I think that in a certain sense all Canada shares in this meeting at Edmonton. If the theme was proposed by the local community, it was certainly done so with a thought towards the whole society for which the cause of the development of peoples is a question of greatest importance and social and international responsibility. Especially since this "development" or "progress" is the new name for "peace".**3.** The liturgy leads us to consider this important theme, first of all, as it is presented in the twenty-fifth chapter of Saint Matthew's Gospel. We have listened today to the Gospel about the final judgment with the same emotion as always. This passage touches some of the most fundamental questions of our faith and morality. These two fields are strictly linked to each other. Perhaps no other passage in the Gospel speaks of their relationship in such a

convincing way. Our faith in Jesus Christ finds here a kind of final expression: The "Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son" (*Jo.* 5, 22). In today's Gospel Christ stands before us as our Judge. He has a special right to make this judgment; indeed he became one of us, our Brother. This brotherhood with the human race - and at the same time his brotherhood with every single person - has led him to the Cross and the Resurrection. Thus he judges in the name of his solidarity with each person and likewise in the name of our solidarity with him, who is our Brother and Redeemer and whom we discover in every human being: "I was hungry . . . I was thirsty . . . I was a stranger . . . naked . . . sick . . . in prison . . ." (*Matth.* 25, 35-36). And those called to judgment - on his right hand and on his left - will ask: When and where? When and where have we seen you like this? When and where have we done what you said? Or: When and where have we not done it? The answer: "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (*Ibid.* 25, 40). And, on the contrary: "As you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me" (*Ibid.* 25, 45).

4. "To one of the least of these my brethren". Thus: to man, to an individual human being in need. Yet, the Second Vatican Council, following the whole of Tradition, warns us not to stop at an "individualistic" interpretation of Christian ethics, since Christian ethics also has its social dimension. The human person lives in a community, in society. And with the community he shares hunger and thirst and sickness and malnutrition and misery and all the deficiencies that result therefrom. In his or her own person the human being is meant to experience the needs of others. So it is that Christ the Judge speaks of "one of the least of the brethren", and at the same time he is speaking of each and of all. Yes. He is speaking of the whole universal dimension of injustice and evil. He is speaking of what today we are accustomed to call the North-South contrast. Hence not only East-West, but also North-South: the increasingly wealthier North, and the increasingly poorer South. Yes, the South - becoming always poorer; and the North - becoming always richer. Richer too in the resources of weapons with which the superpowers and blocs can mutually threaten each other. And they threaten each other - such an argument also exists - in order not to destroy each other. This is a separate dimension - and according to the opinion of many it is the dimension in the forefront - of the deadly threat which hangs over the modern world, which deserves separate attention. Nevertheless, in the light of Christ's words, this poor South will judge the rich North. And the poor people and poor nations - poor in different ways, not only lacking food, but also deprived of freedom and other human rights - will judge those people who take these goods away from them, amassing to themselves the imperialistic monopoly of economic and political supremacy at the expense of others.

5. The Gospel of today's liturgy is very rich in content. It is relevant to the different spheres of injustice and human evil. In the midst of each of these situations stands Christ himself, and as Redeemer and Judge he says: "You did it to me", "you did it not to me". Nevertheless he wishes, in this final judgment - which is constantly in preparation and which in a certain sense is constantly present - to bear witness first of all to the good that has been done. And here also that significant expression of the teaching of the Church takes a start, whose principal formulation became the Encyclical "*Populorum Progressio*". What was the inner concern of Paul VI and the universal Church became a dynamic action and a loud appeal that echoes to this day: "It is not just a matter of eliminating hunger, or even of reducing poverty. The struggle against destitution, though urgent and necessary, is not enough. It is a question, rather, of building a world where every man, no matter what his race, religion or nationality, can live a fully human life, freed from servitude imposed on him by other men or by natural forces; a world where freedom is not an empty word and where the poor man Lazarus can sit down at the same table with the rich man" (Pauli VI, *Populorum Progressio*, 47). Yes, "development" is the new name for peace. Peace is necessary; it is an imperative of our time. And so is this development or progress: the progress of all the disadvantaged.

6. Today we pray in this spirit. Today's liturgy emphasizes very clearly the link between justice and peace. Look at the first reading from Isaiah: "There will be poured on us the spirit from above . . . Integrity will bring peace, justice give lasting security. My people will live in a peaceful home, in safe houses, in quiet dwellings" (*Is.* 32, 15. 17-

18). This was written by the Prophet centuries before Christ. How lasting and unchanging are the desires of individuals and peoples! And later on, after Christ, the Apostle Paul writes in the Letter to the Philippians: "And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (*Phil. 4, 7*). Yet the condition for such peace is human behaviour in every dimension of existence. Hence, Saint Paul continues: "Fill your minds with everything that is true, everything that is noble, everything that is good and pure, everything that we love and honour, and everything that can be thought virtuous or worthy of praise. Keep doing all the things that you learned from me and have been taught by me and have heard or seen that I do. Then the God of peace will be with you" (*Phil. 4, 8-9*).

7. Nous prions aujourd'hui au Canada, dans cette ville d'Edmonton, pour le progrès des peuples. Nous prions donc, selon le sens des paroles du Pape Paul VI, pour la paix, parce que nous prions pour ce qui lui donne actuellement sa signification. Les paroles du prophète Isaïe et de l'Apôtre des Nations nous orientent dans le même sens. C'est ce pour quoi nous prions tandis que nous célébrons cette Eucharistie et que nous y participons. Que notre prière monte jusqu'aux cieux! Que le Dieu de la paix soit avec nous! Que le Dieu de la paix soit avec nous! Ce cri exprime aussi tout le drame de notre époque, toute la menace qui pèse sur elle. La menace nucléaire? Assurément! Mais plus encore: toute la menace de l'injustice, la menace qui provient des structures rigides des systèmes dont l'homme ne peut éviter l'oppression - ces systèmes qui ne s'ouvrent pas assez pour qu'ils puissent aller vers l'homme, servir le développement des peuples, la justice avec toutes ses exigences, et la paix. A travers le monde, le bilan ne semble-t-il pas s'aggraver sans cesse - le bilan de ce que nous "n'avons pas fait pour l'un des plus petits de nos frères?" pour des millions des plus petits de nos frères? pour des milliards? Il faut également le dire ici, au Canada, qui est aussi vaste qu'un continent. Et en même temps ici, en ce lieu même, il faut dire à tous les hommes et les femmes de bonne volonté, et à tous les groupes, les communautés, les organisations, les institutions, les nations et les gouvernements, que ce qui importe vraiment, c'est tout ce que nous "avons fait" et ce que nous ferons encore, ce que nous projeterons et que nous ferons avec toujours plus d'énergie et de détermination. Ainsi le bilan peut progresser, il doit progresser grâce à tout ce que nous "avons fait" pour une personne, pour des millions, des milliards de personnes: ce sera là le bilan positif de ce qui est bon dans l'histoire humaine. The judgment spoken of in today's Gospel is constantly being prepared and is already taking place: What you did for one . . . for millions . . . for billions, "you did it to me"! May the God of peace be with us, here in Canada and everywhere. May justice and peace embrace (*Ps. 85 (84), 10*) once again at the end of the second millennium which prepares us for the coming of Christ, in glory. Amen. Thank you very much for your participation. I should express my deep gratitude for the whole celebration of your faith in Edmonton, above all for the Archdiocese of Edmonton and the archdiocese of this region, including some parts of Saskatchewan. I thank you for yesterday's reception along the streets. It was wonderful, and especially to the groups singing and dancing which met me during the day. And now I thank you with all my heart for this inter-religious prayer. We are looking and working toward the unity of Christians, but we are looking also to the non-Christian religions, to the people who believe in God, who seek him as it is possible for everyone. And with all of them we unite ourselves going towards our common destiny, for this destiny is God himself. The Second Vatican Council deepened our conviction that all men and women of humanity are brothers and sisters, that we are all created by the same Creator, the same God our Father. We are all redeemed by the same Christ Jesus, Son of God; and God, his Spirit, the Holy Spirit, is working in the souls of every one of us, and that is this divine dimension of human existence. We are more and more discovering this divine dimension of human existence and we seek how to give expression to God. This inter-religious prayer was an example, and I thank you for this solemn Eucharist we just finished celebrating here at Edmonton. I thank you for your participation, for all the different preparations. With you I thank Providence for the sun and for the wind. I thank you for your prayers and for the marvellous songs of your choir. Thank you very much for your orchestra. With the same gratitude I repeat my welcome to all the groups, to all the ethnic groups. And to all of you I

repeat: praised, praised be God the Father, our Father, the Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. Thank you very much. © Copyright 1984 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

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