



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE BISHOPS OF INDONESIA
ON THEIR "AD LIMINA" VISIT**

Saturday, 7 June 1980

Venerable and dear Brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ,

1. I am very grateful for your visit today - grateful for the greetings you bring me from your local Churches, grateful for your own fraternal love in Christ Jesus, grateful for the ecclesial communion we celebrate together in Catholic unity. This *ecclesial communion* - this Catholic unity - was the theme of my address to your brother Bishops from Indonesia who were here less than two weeks ago. It is likewise the basis for this *ad limina* visit and for every *ad limina* visit to Rome.

2. Precisely because of this ecclesial communion, I personally, as Successor of Peter, experience deeply the need to make every effort to understand as fully as possible *the problems of your local Churches* and to assist in solving these problems in accordance with the will of Christ for his Church. The issues you have presented to me affect the well-being of your people. Some of them raise questions that touch the Catholic faith and Catholic life in general. All of them represent pastoral concerns that in differing ways are the object your responsibility and mine, matters to be examined with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, in the light of the perennial value of God's word upheld by the Magisterium of the Church, and in the context of ecclesial communion.

3. Some of these issues, and other questions too, necessitate a thorough examination, which in turn requires time and a confident exchange of viewpoints between the Bishops of Indonesia and the Apostolic See. In every discussion of pastoral needs, *primacy must be given to the word of God as the basis for truly effective solutions*. The authentic interpretation of the word of God and its applications to life have been made by the Church over the centuries, and this interpretation and these applications form part of the patrimony of Catholic life today.

In this generation, *the Second Vatican Council* - an eminently pastoral Ecumenical Council - has reiterated teaching and established norms that *will continue to direct all our pastoral efforts and all our ecclesial activities*.

4. On my part, I shall do everything in my power to promote the good of your people and of the universal Church. With God's help I hope to fulfil my role, which is to confirm you in your ministry of preaching "the unsearchable riches of Christ"^[1], of proclaiming salvation in Jesus Christ as the great gift of God's love, and of building up the Church day after day, year after year. In particular, my role as Successor of Peter is directed to *the strengthening of my brother Bishops in the Catholic faith* which they profess and teach, and which is the foundation of all pastoral endeavours and of all Christian living.

5. It was in the perspective of faith and the word of God that John XXIII interpreted "the signs of the times". Before the Second Vatican Council would enter into a consideration of the many issues facing it, Pope John wanted to insist on the pastoral nature of the event. But he knew that a *pastoral Council* - in order to be genuinely effective, in order to reflect truly the pastoral love of the Good Shepherd - would have *a strong doctrinal basis*. For this reason, in his address at the opening of the Council he stated: "The greatest concern of the Ecumenical Council is this: that the sacred deposit of Christian doctrine should be more effectively guarded and taught"^[2].

This ever more effective guarding and teaching of the word of God would take into account the manner of presentation of doctrine, and indeed the whole question of the incarnation of the word of God in local cultures, but it would also mean the transmission of the pure and entire doctrine which, throughout the centuries, had become, in its perennial validity, the common patrimony of everyone.

6. In this spirit, the Council itself laser on would emphasize the Bishop's role of announcing the full truth of the Gospel and proclaiming "the whole mystery of Christ"^[3]. Hence, as we deal with the many pastoral problems that face our Christian people - some of which are linked to their Baptismal election, others to the particular circumstances of their lives - we are constantly *challenged to bear witness to the fullness of the Catholic faith*. The Holy Spirit who assists us to read the signs of the times is the same Holy Spirit who came upon the Apostles, the same Holy Spirit who has assisted the Magisterium throughout the ages and has provided for the needs of the Church in every century, and who has produced fruits of justice and holiness in abundance in the hearts of the faithful.

In moral questions as in doctrinal issues we must continue to proclaim the Church's teaching "in season and out of season"^[4]. Hence we urge our people to admit only one measure of Christian love: to love one another as Christ has loved us^[5]; we charge them to bear constant witness to Christ's justice and his truth.

7. In our ministry at the service of life we are called to testify to the fullness of the truth we hold, so that all may know the stand of the Catholic Church on *the utter inviolability of human life from the moment of conception*. Hence we proclaim with deep conviction that any wilful destruction of human life by procured abortion, for any reason whatsoever, is not in accord with God's commandment, that it is entirely outside the competence of any individual or group, and that it cannot redound to true human progress.

8. In the question of the Church's teaching on *the regulation of birth*, we are called to profess in union with the whole Church the exigent but uplifting teaching recorded in the Encyclical "*Humanae Vitae*", which my predecessor Paul VI put forth "by virtue of the mandate entrusted to us by Christ"[6].

Particularly in this regard we must be conscious of the fact that God's wisdom supersedes human calculations and his grace is powerful in people's lives. It is important for us to realize the direct influence of Christ on the members of his Body in all realms of moral challenges.

On the occasion of the *ad limina* visit of another group of Bishops I made reference to this principle, which has many applications, saying: "to us never fear that the challenge is too great for our people: they were redeemed by the precious blood of Christ they are his people. Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ vindicates to himself the final responsibility for the acceptance of his word and for the growth of his Church. It is he, Jesus Christ, who will continue to give the grace to his people to meet the requirements of his word, despite all difficulties, despite all weaknesses. And it is up to us to continue to proclaim the message of salvation in its entirety and purity, with patience, compassion and the conviction that what is impossible with man is possible with God.

We ourselves are only part of one generation in salvation history, but 'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and for ever'[7]. He is indeed able to sustain us as we recognize the strength of his grace, the power of his word and the efficacy of his merits"[8].

9. Christ's grace does not eliminate the need for compassionate understanding and increased pastoral effort on our part, but it does point to the fact that, in the fast analysis, everything depends on Christ. It is Christ's word we preach; it is his Church we construct day after day, according to his criterion. Jesus Christ has built his Church on the foundation of the Apostles and prophets[9], and in a special way on Peter[10]. But *it remains his Church*, the Church of Christ: "... and on this rock I will build *my Church*". Our people are ours, only because they are, above all, his. Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd, the author of our faith, the hope of the world.

It is important for us to reflect on the mystery of the headship of Christ over his Church. Through his Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ gives grace and strength his people and he invites all of them to follow him. At times, beginning with Peter, Christ calls his people to be led, as he himself explains, where they do not wish to go[11].

10. Venerable Brothers: my recent pastoral visits confirm something that we have all experienced.

Our people are constantly turning to us with the expectation and the plea: proclaim to us the word of God; *speak to us about Christ*. Their request is an echo of the request spoken of by Saint John and made to the Apostle Philip: "We wish to see Jesus"^[12]. Truly the world entreats us to speak about Christ. It is he who will shape the new heavens and the new earth. It is he who by his word of truth fashions and controls the destinies of our people.

With renewed pastoral love and zeal, let us proclaim his saving word to the world. Relying on the assistance of Mary, Mother of the Incarnate Word, let us together commend our people and our ministry to him who alone has "the words of eternal life"^[13].

With these sentiments I send my greetings back to all the members of your local Churches, and especially to all the Christian families. I offer my encouragement and gratitude to the priest and religious and to all who collaborate with you in the cause of the Gospel. To the sick and suffering goes my special blessing, and to everyone the expression of my love in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

[1] *Eph.* 3, 8.

[2] Ioannis XXIII *Allocutio in solemnibus Concilii inauguratione*, die 11 oct. 1962.

[3] *Christus Dominus*, 12.

[4] *2 Tim.* 4, 2.

[5] Cfr. *Io.* 13, 34.

[6] Pauli VI *Humanae Vitae*: AAS 60 (1968) 485.

[7] *Hebr.* 13, 8.

[8] Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Allocutio ad sacros Praesules Papuae Novae Guineae atque Insularum Salomoniarum, occasione oblata eorum ipsorum visitationis «ad limina»*, die 23 oct. 1979: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, II, 2 (1979) 835.

[9] Cfr. *Eph.* 2, 20.

[10] Cfr. *Matth.* 16, 18.

[11] Cfr. *Io.* 21, 18.

[12] *Ibid.* 12, 21.

[13] *Ibid.* 6, 68.

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