



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE BISHOPS OF MALAYSIA, SINGAPORE AND BRUNEI
ON THEIR "AD LIMINA" VISIT**

Friday, 23 May 1980

My dear Brother Bishops,

1. With deep fraternal affection in Christ Jesus, I welcome you today to the Vatican. Your presence here as pastors of the Church spread throughout Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei gives us the opportunity to express our unity in Christ and in the hierarchy of his Church. This is likewise a joyful occasion for *reflecting briefly on the mystery of the Church* as it is lived in your lands and by your people.

In this reflection, which we make through the grace of the Holy Spirit, we find encouragement in our pastoral ministry and strength for our lives. Our apostolic mission of evangelization is linked with complicated problems affecting people's daily lives, their human dignity and their eternal salvation. Although there are no facile solutions to the issues that confront us, meditating on the mystery of the Church lightens our burdens and gives us a heightened sense of our ecclesial mission. In turn, we are able more effectively to sustain our brethren in their Christian vocation, thereby fulfilling our pastoral mandate: *Pascite qui est in vobis gregem Dei* [1].

2. Of paramount importance in the mystery of the Church is the fact *that Christ is alive in his people*. His life goes on in the communities of the faithful throughout the world, in all those who by faith and Baptism have received justification in his name. The life of Christ continues in the Church today, in all those brothers and sisters of the Lord whom you have been sent to serve. Even what is so basic to the person of Christ - his divine filiation - is lived in the Church through the grace of divine adoption[2].

And because the faithful are configured to Christ the Son of God, they are able, through the Holy

Spirit, to express Christ's sentiments to the Father. Hence, *Christ's prayer goes on* in each generation; his continuing praise of his Father is a reality in his Church.

Yes, Christ is living in his members, and he therefore wills *to suffer in them*, permitting them to fill up what is lacking in his sufferings for the sake of his Body, the Church[3]. This mystery has entered into the consciousness of Christians, who realize that they should rejoice to share Christ's sufferings[4], and that, when they are tried for his sake, it is better to suffer for doing what is right, rather than for what is wrong[5].

And in his Church - once again in accordance with the plan of the Father - *Christ grows in wisdom, age and grace*[6] as his members, through his word and the action of his sacraments, come to full maturity in him.[7]

In Christ's Body, *his zeal is perpetuated*; and his Church is aflame with the desire of his heart: "I must proclaim the Good News of the kingdom"[8]. The sick are visited, healing is offered to the brokenhearted, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them. The catechesis of the Kingdom goes on in the young and old.

And because Christ is living, *his love above all is kept alive in the Church*. Jesus continues to love his Father, and the Father continues to love his Son in all those whom the Son has taken to himself as brothers and sisters. And the mystery of a love received from the Father and given back to the Father is the legacy of all Christ's disciples: "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have for one another"[9].

3. This mystery of Christ living in the Church is enacted *in every community*. It is a mystery that goes on from generation to generation, and it became part of your people's lives through missionary activity that God's grace made fruitful. This universal design of Christ enacted in every community throughout the world creates *a bond of unity between all communities*, giving them an essential unity - a unity in living the life of Christ.

Each individual Church, provided it remains anchored in this unity, is able to translate the treasure of faith into the concrete life of every day, where it has its own aspirations, riches, limitations, and ways of praying, loving and looking at life and the world[10]. As the local Church endeavours to assimilate the truth ever more, it is constantly challenged to preserve unaltered the content of the apostolic faith which the Lord entrusted to the Apostles. This task is, above all, the responsibility of the Bishops to be exercised in union with the Successor of Peter and all the Bishops of the Catholic Church.

4. At every juncture of the Church's life, the Holy Spirit is present because he has been sent by Christ to dwell in the Church, and to keep it alive. In a word, *the Holy Spirit perpetuates the life of Christ in the Church*. The dignity of Christian life and the value of Christian conduct are linked to

the reality of Christ living for ever in his Church. And it is in the context of this reality that we are sent to minister as Bishops.

The means at our disposal - the only means that could possibly be commensurate with the supernatural goals which are the aims of the Church's activities - are the instruments of faith. In the words of Saint Paul, they are "the armour of God" and "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God"^[11]. As Bishops we are called to give our people the word of God, *to expound to them the whole mystery of Christ*^[12] after the example of the Apostle who did not hesitate to announce "God's design in its entirety"^[13].

5. Dear Brethren, the realization that our ministry is totally dedicated to the life of Christ in his members - which is perpetuated through the proclamation of the word, especially in the sacramental renewal of the death of Christ - gives us deep joy and trust. Christ is with us today and always, and he tells us and all our people: "Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one; I died, and behold I am alive for evermore"^[14].

6. Yes, beloved Brothers, Christ is alive in Malaysia, in Singapore and in Brunei - in all Asia. He is alive for evermore in your parishes, in all your communities, in your dioceses. And may you find strength and hope in realizing that *everything you do as Bishops is directed to perpetuating the life of Jesus Christ in his Church*.

7. And now I would ask you to take my special greetings to your priests and religious, and to speak with them of their important role in the living Body of Christ. I would ask you to encourage the seminarians in their vocation, and to do everything possible to promote vocations to the priesthood. Please tell the catechists how much the Church depends on their generous cooperation and on their holiness of life. And may all the Christian families be repeatedly reminded just how intimately they are linked with the mystery of Christ's life in the Church.

And may the Mother of the living Christ, the Star of evangelization, be always near you to light your path and to bring all your beloved people to the fullness of life in Jesus Christ our saving God.

[1] 1 Pt 5:2.

[2] Cf. Gal 4:5, Eph 1:5.

[3] Cf. Col 1:24.

[4] Cf. 1 Pt 4:13.

[5] Cf. 1 Pt 3:17.

[6] Cf. *Lk* 2:52.

[7] Cf. *Eph* 4:13.

[8] *Lk* 4:43.

[9] *Jn* 13:35.

[10] Cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 63.

[11] *Eph* 6:13, 17.

[12] Cf. *Christus Dominus*, 12.

[13] *Acts* 20:27.

[14] *Rev* 1:17-18.

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