



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO PAKISTAN, PHILIPPINES I, GUAM (UNITED STATES OF AMERICA II), JAPAN, ANCHORAGE (UNITED STATES OF AMERICA II)
(FEBRUARY 16-27, 1981)

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO PROFESSIONAL PEOPLE**

*Araneta Coliseum, Manila
Wednesday, 18 February 1981*

Dear professional people, my dear friends in Christ,

1. It is a joy for me to be able to greet the representatives of various professions from different parts of the Philippines : lawyers, doctors, nurses, engineers, educators and members of other professions as well. Many of you are in positions of leadership or community service in the world, or lay leaders in the Church—you are people who have had the benefit of education and training.

Permit me to go immediately to the heart of my message. It is this : *Jesus Christ needs you for the building up of his Kingdom on earth.* And the Church needs your special gifts, individually and collectively, to fulfill her mission of communicating Christ. Moreover, millions of your fellowmen and women count on your services in order to live worthy lives in accordance with their human and Christian dignity.

2. You can see then that this meeting emphasizes *the Church's great interest in you*, and her desire to consult, to listen to and to bring together all those who play a responsible part in the different fields of culture, and who exercise this responsibility in a Christian spirit of service. As representatives of professions that require greater educational attainment, and as creators and spreaders of culture, you share the Church's life and mission in a specific way.

This present meeting also emphasizes the need to go beyond an individualistic way of life. It is up

to you to create *ever more effective forms of association and collaboration* between Catholics belonging to the professions in general and within each profession in particular, so that you can reflect upon your responsibilities as Christians in the light of faith and the Church's social teaching.

3. You are people who have reached your present positions as a result of *hard and serious efforts*, both personal and collective. Personal efforts, in the sense that the studies which you undertook in order to obtain your professional qualifications certainly demanded of you sacrifice, self-discipline and intellectual rigor. It is only after you have reached the goal that you can properly appreciate the path that has led to it. One only reaps the fruits of what was well sown in the first place.

But you are also the result of a great effort on the collective level. For your families and your nation have had to invest great material and spiritual resources in order to train and perfect ever more numerous builders of society, with a solid intellectual and technical education.

4. You have a twofold calling. In the first place, you have to meet your personal needs and those of your families, through the exercise of your professions. In this you have sometimes experienced difficulties and frustrations and perhaps even discouragement. And yet you must not give up, knowing as you do that you are also *called upon to make your contribution to the service of the common good*.

When things are going well, never shut yourselves off from society for the sake of making money, gaining power or acquiring more knowledge ; do not retreat into a position of privilege. May you put your talents to good use by serving ever more generously the needs and aspirations of all your brothers and sisters in the Philippines. I am thinking in particular of that great number of people who, as a result of different circumstances—injustice, poverty, the need to make a bare living, the lack of cultural stimulus—have been unable to attain the levels of university training and education that you have enjoyed.

Thus there is a close link between your demanding professional activities and the hard toil of the factory worker, the life of the worker on the land, the self-denial of the housewife in her home. This is why your sensitivity to human and Christian values will be the source of a *creative energy* that will help you to place your skills and your activity really and effectively at the service of your people, in response to their needs.

The complete development of the people of your country, and the satisfaction of their spiritual and material needs, call for much effort on your part ; health-care for everyone ; the defense of the sacred nature of human life and its promotion ; the affirmation of the role of law in social and political relations if true order and real freedom are to be ensured ; the building of worthy housing, properly adapted to every family and every individual ; the education of youth by teaching directed towards the search for truth and its affirmation; the balanced and fruitful management of natural resources in order to ensure that everyone has a fair share of their benefits : all these are matters

that concern you directly.

It is often the case that the great percentage of the lay people who are zealously endeavoring as organized groups to permeate temporal affairs with the spirit of the Gospel and to build genuine Christian communities come mostly from non-professional groups. Thus an unfortunate impression is created that the leader/professional groups are not deeply interested in religious activities.

In a country where the vast majority of people look up to the leaders and are easily encouraged by example, this apostolate of witness and example has great effectiveness and should be increasingly adopted. I sincerely hope that you can offer more and more of your talent and time in the service of the Church, in the lay apostolate of building up an authentic Christian community. Those, for example, who are recognized leaders in the field of health can do much to promote the Catholic principles regarding the intrinsic value of life in all its stages. Similarly, in the other professions, true Christian leadership is most effective.

5. May your efforts in this direction always be sustained by inflexible integrity of conduct, in the midst of the professional problems that you meet. But even more, may they be inspired by a desire to help those who are most in need, so that your service will be ruled by the criteria of justice and truth, of freedom and integrity, and be crowned with love. Remember always that as Christians you are called *to live in accordance with the principles that you have learned from Christ and his Church*. You are called to live upright lives consistent with your Gospel principles.

6. Everyone is aware that the disciplines that you exercise call for constant renewal, in order that you may keep up with the rapid pace of new discoveries. Your capacity to adapt yourselves and to keep abreast of these developments will depend on your constant study of the basic principles underlying these disciplines. And may your Catholic faith also be constantly renewed ; may it grow deeper and develop, through the radical dynamism of *constant conversion to Christ*, a conversion animated by a life lived according to the Gospel and in harmony with the Magisterium, nourished by a life of personal piety based upon prayer and the reception of the sacraments. May the testimony of your faith shine brightly in your professional lives, as well as in your personal and family lives.

7. You are aware of the present-day risks involved in shutting oneself up within the narrow limits of a "specialization". Such specializations can narrow one's horizons, fragment one's personal life and obscure the rich nature of life in general. It is very clear that professional specialization must be considered within the wider setting of what is called general culture. It is in this context that I urge you to take as your fundamental points of reference the religious and ethical values that are the powerful promoters of culture by shedding their light on man's different problems and deepest aspirations and by transforming his whole life and all his knowledge. Your professional experience will thus gain in depth, perspective and fruitfulness.

As Catholics with greater educational attainment and as representatives of the professions, you are called upon to show how knowledge and professional work blend with the wealth and resources of the culture of the people of the Philippines. That culture is rooted in the Christian tradition, and is therefore imbued with liberating and life-giving wisdom concerning the being and dignity of the human person, concerning the meaning of his life, his death and his final destiny.

I greet you once more, and in your persons I greet your families and all the representatives of the professions in this great country. May God grant you his abundant blessings !

8. And now I would like to address myself to another group among you, those men and women so very dear to the Church and to your Pope—*the catechists*.

Thank you, my dear catechists, for the gift of your presence. Thank you for permitting me to tell you, and through you, all the other catechists of the country who are not here with us, *how much you are needed*.

The world needs you because it needs catechesis. For the most precious gift that the Church can offer the modern world—confused and restless as it is—is to form Christians sure about essentials and humbly joyful in their faith. Catechesis does this, and it does this through you.

The Church needs you. She needs you in order to be able to accomplish her absolutely fundamental task of forming Christ in the hearts of people, of putting people in intimate communion with Christ^[1]. In catechesis, it is Christ, the Word Incarnate and the Son of God, who is taught, and everything else that is taught is with reference to him. How noble and important then is your service! But it is difficult as well as noble, delicate as well as important.

Catechesis is not just a matter of transmitting ideas. It involves above all *communicating Christ and his life-giving message* and helping people to give their response of faith and love.

What do you need, my dear catechists, in order to elicit the proper response to Christ's message of life? You need to *be faithful to Christ, to his Church and to man*.

You must be faithful first of all to Christ, to his truth, to his mandate ; otherwise there would be distortion, betrayal. As catechists you are, after all, *echoes of Christ*^[2]. The Church too should be the object of your consistent faithfulness. For catechesis, which is growth in faith and the maturing of the Christian life, is a work that Christ wills to accomplish in his Church. An authentic catechist must necessarily be an ecclesial catechist. Finally, you must be faithful to man, for the Lord's word and message is intended for every human person. Not an abstract, imaginary person, but the individual who lives in time, with his or her difficulties, problems and hopes. It is to this person that the Gospel must be proclaimed, so that through it he or she may receive from the Holy Spirit the light and strength to come to full Christian maturity. To a large extent, the effectiveness of

catechesis will depend on its capacity to give meaning, Christian meaning, to everything that constitutes man's life in this world.

Beloved catechists, I have spoken to you with deep affection. I would like to stay with you longer, but I must meet your other brothers and sisters as well. Before leaving, however, I assure you of my confidence, give you my love and assure you of the peace of Christ.

May the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother and Model of all catechists, guide you in your great mission to communicate Christ. May she give joy to you and your families and protect the Philippines forever.

[1] Cf. [Catechesi Tradendae](#), 5.

[2] *Ibid.*, 6.

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