



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE BISHOPS OF PAKISTAN
ON THEIR "AD LIMINA" VISIT**

Monday, 3 July 1989

*Dear Cardinal Cordeiro,
My dear Brother Bishops,*

1. With great joy I greet and welcome each one of you. Your *ad Limina* visit brings into vivid focus the reality of the Church in Pakistan, where God has placed you to shepherd his people so that the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church may be present and operative in the hearts and lives of the faithful (Cfr. *Christus Dominus*, 11). Through each one of you, I greet the priests, religious and laity of your Dioceses: Karachi, Faisalabad, Hyderabad, Islamabad-Rawalpindi, Lahore and Multan. I encourage you all with the words of Saint Paul: "We give thanks to God always for you all... remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labour of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" (*1Thess.* 1, 2-3). Although you are a "little flock" in your own country, you are filled with hope as you summon people to faith or confirm them in a faith already living (Cfr. *Christus Dominus*, 12).

Your prayers at the tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul, and your conversation with the Successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome, are the expression of *the joyful communion of faith and love linking you and your local Churches with the Apostolic See and with the whole Body of Christ* throughout the world. Today we celebrate the bonds which unite us in the Episcopal College and we renew our commitment to the ministry that is ours at the service of the revelation and realization of God's kingdom in the world (Cfr. *Luc.* 22, 29). As members of the College of Bishops we have succeeded the Apostles, chosen to shepherd the Church until the end of the world (Cfr. *Lumen Gentium*, 18). To the Bishops has been entrusted in a special way the task of proclaiming and teaching the hidden "wisdom of God" which was made manifest in Christ and which lives on in his Church (Cfr. *1 Cor* 2, 7) for the salvation of souls and the glory of the Most Holy Trinity. This is

the measure of our responsibility before God and the Church.

2. At this point of your *ad Limina* visit, I wish to confirm you in your dedication to the guiding and fostering of ecclesial life in your particular Churches. As Bishops, you are fully aware of how important is for all to be clear in mind and in ecclesial practice about *the primacy of the Church's transcendent mission*. Without in any way diminishing the nature and value of the Catholic community's manifold service to individuals and to society, it is important to recognize that the Church is above all the community of those *who believe in Jesus Christ*, the Eternal Word made flesh, and who *live in the power of the Holy Spirit*. Saint John's Gospel says that to be in the Father and the Son is the essential condition "so that the world may believe" (Cfr. *Jo* 17, 20). To be in the Father and in the Son through the Holy Spirit is an original and fundamental concept which gives meaning and purpose to all that the Church is and does in the world. It is a concept which cannot be overlooked in planning and executing programmes of pastoral activity.

The world looks to Christians for a convincing testimony of the total salvation offered by Christ. How familiar is the Gospel narrative describing Christ's disciples who were approached by people who said to them: "We wish to see Jesus" (*Jo*. 12, 21). In the Gospel Jesus replies to those who sought him by speaking of the grain of wheat which falls into the earth and dies in order to produce much fruit (Cfr. *Ibid.* 12, 24). And he goes on to say: "If any one serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there shall my servant be also; if any one serves me, the Father will honour him" (*Ibid.* 12, 26). The true vitality of the universal Church and of each particular Church is to be gauged in terms of *God's love and grace poured into the hearts of the faithful through the Holy Spirit* who has been given to us (Cfr. *Rom.* 5, 5). The Church must always be actively engaged in a dialogue of truth and loving service with the whole of the human family. But she must herself be secure and confident in the "grace" of Christ which is at the depths of her life.

3. A primary part of our episcopal ministry is to *promote the holiness of God's people*. No efforts must be spared in this task. Nor can we neglect this responsibility in favour of other more immediate concerns. Thus it is with great joy that I note your dedication to the spiritual and pastoral formation of the *priests*, the *seminarians*, and the many *catechists* in Pakistan. We are all well aware of the contribution made by the catechists, who are vital collaborators in the proclamation of the word of God to your people, especially in rural areas where Catholics are often widely scattered and far from a mission centre. You have likewise given considerable attention to the special role and needs of the *men and women religious* who so generously share the burden of the pastoral ministry. I note that in your recent meeting with the Major Religious Superiors you gave much attention to the question of formation.

For your wise commitment to this all-important task, and for what you do to support and improve the activities of your seminaries and houses of formation, especially the National Major Seminary in Karachi, I thank you in the name of Christ and his Church. In the same way I encourage you to continue to give special care to the National Catechetical Centre at Khushpur, as well as to the

other Diocesan and local centres of Christian training.

4. It is significant for the life of the Church that the Fathers of the 1985 Extraordinary Synod of Bishops stated that “today we have tremendous need of saints” (Synodi extr. Episc. 1985 *Relatio Finalis*, 11 A 4). In this sense we are called to understand better and to esteem the Church’s great *spiritual traditions of holiness and discipline*. The fostering of penance, prayer, self-giving, charity and justice (*Ibid.*) is the fundamental path of renewal. It is therefore also the path of the Church in Pakistan. Again to be in the Father and the Son, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, is the essential condition and challenge of your ministry and of your pastoral effectiveness.

Particularly in *the pastoral care of youth*, Bishops and their collaborators should not fail to present the full challenge of Jesus Christ and his Gospel. From such a spiritual encounter an increase can be expected in the number of young men and women who, in spite of obstacles, are deeply committed to Christian living. Among them there are surely many who will listen to the call of Christ to follow him more closely in the priesthood and religious life. This is one of the most urgent needs of the Church in your country at present, as in many other parts of the world. May the Lord of the harvest grant you the joy of an increasing number of vocations to meet the growing demands of the Christian community

5. There exists a close *connection between holiness of life and the promotion of a more human way of life in society* (Cfr. *Lumen Gentium*, 40), for it is from a converted and reconciled heart that goodness and justice flow forth in human relations. Time and energy taken away from service. The same love impels the Church to serve man as a member of the earthly city (Congr. pro Doctr. Fidei *Libertatis Conscientia*, 63). The same love that inspired Christ to give himself on the Cross as the Redeemer of mankind also moved him to have compassion on the multitude and to raise the widow’s son. The two forms of service complement each other, but one cannot be reduced to the other or made independent of the other.

The *Church’s many activities in Pakistan*, in the areas of education, health-care, social assistance and development, are ultimately channels of love, whereby Christ’s disciples bear witness to the *primacy of the new commandment of love* which he gave at the Last Supper. From that love all these activities receive their impulse and direction. Their purpose is to ensure people a way of life in harmony with their inalienable value and dignity as children of God. To all engaged in these endeavours I send my encouragement and prayerful support.

The Church in Pakistan is deeply involved in *the field of Catholic education*. I know that the difficulties which you encounter in this area are not small, and that through the Episcopal Conference’s Commission for Education you are seeking to identify needs and to set a programme in each Diocese and on the national level in order to serve better the ecclesial community and effectively contribute to the development of the nation as a whole. It is to be hoped that understanding and collaboration between the public authorities and the Church will bring a

solution to any outstanding questions regarding freedom of education, and that all will be convinced of the need to do everything possible to provide this basic service to young Pakistanis at every social level.

6. As a small minority in a predominantly Muslim society, the Church in Pakistan lives and moves within a framework which calls for *sensitivity and great love for Muslim brothers and sisters, while at the same time advocating respect for that freedom of religion and of conscience which is the hallmark of a just and peaceful society*. In your good relations with the Muslim community there are some questions on which it is necessary to seek a sincere and enlightened interreligious dialogue. I am aware that you are attentive to this need and that in all things you proceed in the way outlined by the Council Decree "Nostra Aetate" (Cfr. *Nostra Aetate*, 3). There are many areas of social justice, moral values, peace, development and freedom in which Christians and Muslims can make common cause, in a spirit of brotherhood proper to those who adore the one God and Father in heaven.

7. My brothers in the Episcopate: you are entrusted with the Good News of Christ's Kingdom of "righteousness faith, love and peace" (*2Tim. 2, 22*). You manifest a great concern for the Church in Pakistan. May you continue to be generous and self-sacrificing in your ministry. *Support one another in prayer and effective collaboration* in the many and difficult tasks which comprise your ecclesial service.

Upon you and your Dioceses I invoke the maternal and loving help of the Blessed Virgin Mary. May she inspire you as you work to restore all things in Christ. May his peace be with you all.

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