THE PATH OF SALVATION'S MYSTERY

Fourteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time July 9, 1978

Readings:

Zechariah 9:9-10 Romans 8:9, 11-13 Matthew 11:25-30

My dear sisters and brothers.

Each Sunday Christian people come together to be nourished by God's Word and to participate in the Eucharist. These are the two objectives of our Sunday celebration. We do not come here just to listen to the Word but to make that Word come alive and to celebrate that Word that becomes a Passover, that becomes the body and blood of Jesus who redeems us. It is for this reason that we bring this stream of living water, this Word of God to the concrete events of our life. Thus our Sunday Eucharist is not simply a parallel act to our lives, but is the true soul and power and spirit of our own lives and history.

Therefore I am always careful to give you a few examples of the historical reality in which we live. This does not mean that I leave the framework of the Word of God. Rather this is an invitation to all of you to enlighten your own family and personal problems in the same way that I try each Sunday to enlighten the realities and the problems of our nation. If we are Christians then we should be known by the fact that we enlighten the realities of our lives not with the criteria of the world or with selfish and materialistic criteria or with the criteria of hatred or vengeance but rather we use the criteria of love that is inspired by Christ.

Thus my sisters and brothers, the realities that we point out here are later brought to the Eucharistic altar, illuminated by the Word and God and there at the altar the whole life of our nation, our family life and our individual personal lives, together with the gifts of bread and wine, the fruit of the earth and the work of the whole week are placed like bundles of wheat on our altar. They are the realities that each week we want to illuminate. Sunday Mass is beautiful because we are able to bring the fruit of our work to the Lord --- we are able to place before the Lord our disappointments, hopes, failures, and sadness. We give all of this to the Lord and in response we hear the words of today's gospel: *Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest* (1). We leave the Mass truly refreshed because we realize that we do not walk through life alone. A divine power accompanies us, a power that gives meaning to our suffering, our hopes and our plans.

Events of the week

For example, my sisters and brothers, this week I have awaited with anguish and hope a response that would relieve the anxiety of Mrs. Matsumoto. All the newspapers have published the call of the Archbishop¹ who has echoed the anxiety of this woman and who has

desired that this cry should reach those who know the whereabouts of Mr. Matsumoto. Where is he? How is he? His wife wants answers to these questions and has extended her hands in a gesture of willingness to negotiate in order to discover where he is. It is not true that the family has closed off the possibility of negotiation. She is willing to negotiate but naturally if the conditions for his release are of a political nature or if the conditions are insurmountable for those who are negotiating, then it becomes the responsibility of the politicians to resolve this matter. His wife does not wish to deal with political conditions.

Remember, however, that above all the political interests of any party or group, humanitarian expressions are always valid and it is in the name of humanitarian interests that Mr. Matsumoto's wife offers the possibility of negotiations.

I expressed in my communication the fact that I am also pained by the loss of freedom --- and who knows if we are not also dealing here with the loss of life --- of those persons that the abductors of Mr. Matsumoto² demand to be set free before releasing their hostage. Therefore, in the name of sound morality I repeat here a great principle that is often forgotten and that must be kept in mind when dealing with the moral order: *Non sunt facienda mala ut eveniant bona*, a Latin phrase which means, *evil deeds cannot be done in order to achieve something that is good³*. The freedom and the dignity of people cannot be bought by trampling on the innocent. One cannot pretend to bring comfort to the family members of those who have disappeared and then inflict this same anguish on another family. One can never use evil means in order to achieve a good end. When people say that the Church has become communist, they forget that this principle is unimportant to communists yet the Church continues to proclaim this same principle. The ends do not justify the means. This norm has great implications and as I said, this norm has been forgotten by many people during these times.

This week I was very happy to read the moving account of the young child that I spoke about last Sunday, the child Mauro whom the Pope referred to in his audience two weeks ago⁴. Mauro Carassale, an eleven year old child offered to take the place of his older brother, fifteen years old, who was about to be abducted. He said to the abductors: *Don't take him! He is ill. Take me.* He then disappeared. Finally, this week he returned to his home. It is said that Mauro has spoken very kindly about his abductors and when he said good bye to them, they said: *Forgive us Mauro! Forgive us Mauro!*

Hopefully these human sentiments will also prevail in the case of Mr. Matsumoto. I conclude my statement about this situation by referring to the Pope's words concerning another abduction, namely, that of Aldo Moro. The Pope spoke the following words to Mr. Moro's abductors: Whenever we have denounced sin or crime, we have done so with love. With love and prayer we hope that, no matter how criminal a person might be, those noble sentiments of the human person will triumph. We pray to God who loves the hearts of sinners, we pray that they might return to a more humanitarian path in life⁵. Always, when we have denounced a sin or crime, we have done so with love. With love and prayer, we hope that the nobility in human feelings, however criminal a person may be, will triumph for good. And we beg the Lord, loving in our heart all sinners, that they may return to the truth of a more humanitarian way. I hope that these words, which I know reach many corners of our nation, will also reach those mysterious silent places where Mr. Matsumoto is hidden so that soon we might all be able to rejoice together as a family is restored to integrity and serenity.

We have not received any further news about the disappearance of Dr. Eduardo Antonio Esopinoza Fiallos, a professor of Medicine at the University. His family asks that he be freed or brought before the courts.

We also suffer along with 273 families without work in the mines of San Sebastián, where promises were made and not fulfilled. May the Ministry of Works feel more responsible for this conflict, and for others, and restore tranquility to these people without work or food.

With great pastoral concern we have seen how the voice of the Church resounds in Latin America just as we attempt to make the voice of Church resound here in this Diocese. After gathering together the results of the consultation that was made in Latin America, seventy bishops in Bogotá prepared a document that will serve as a basis for dialogue when the bishops gather together in Puebla in October. They have made very energetic and critical observations about the actual social, economic, and political situation in Latin America. The Episcopal Conference in Colombia presented a document in which they made a very serious analysis of their country. Without a doubt these voices will be heard in Puebla! Indeed, they must be heard! We must listen to the Colombian Church that has stated that the political and economic sectors of their country are responsible for the crisis that the nation currently experiences. They affirm that the national institutions have been seriously hindered in their functions and effectiveness in fulfilling their corresponding tasks according to ethical and regulatory norms. They also stated that the military has not escaped this moral crisis that has taken hold of the entire nation; indeed, they speak of a great moral crisis that has enveloped every sector of their national life. The capitalist mentality has absorbed Christian values that ought to guide the nation. It is not enough, they say, to just cry out about the dangers of communism if we want to save our nation. It seems as though a game is being played between communism and those different social and political ideologies that are inspired by capitalism. We might even call these different forms atheistic because they adore the god of money and power and have forgotten the God who is the Father of all people.

This week the Vatican Radio made reference to a difficult era in the relations between the Church and the State, especially in Latin America, Africa and certain communist nations. They spoke of a Christian perspective and not just the danger of communism. They spoke of a similar danger in the form of anti-communism that is inspired not just by Christian principles but also by selfish interests, interests that from the time of Pope Pius XII have been called accomplices of communism. This false anti-communism⁶ is very similar to what is occurring in our own situation.

Certain regimes, the Vatican Radio said, certain authoritarian regimes in Latin American are concerned about the work that the Catholic Church is carrying out on behalf of human rights and the less favored classes of society⁷. It is very certain, my sisters and brothers, that wherever the Church proclaims a gospel that demands human promotion and development, then in those places conflicts will arise. We only have to look at the Latin American continent where we attempt to speak about the demands of the Kingdom of God, demands for a more just society here on earth among Christian women and men --- we are very much aware of the conflict that continues to arise here. We have the recent example of the priest who was assassinated in Guatemala⁸ because he spoke out against taking the water from his town in order to supply water to the capital. Wherever efforts are made to defend the poor and encourage the development of people so that they do not remain a mob but rather analyze the reality with a critical conscience, there the Church will always be seen as a disturbance. Thus the problem that we experience here in El Salvador is the same problem that is

experienced in many other nations. Naturally wherever that gospel is proclaimed in a way that does not provoke such a conflict, then everything goes well. We see that things go well for some of our Protestant sisters and brothers when they speak about a gospel that involves no commitment to the people. But this is not the true gospel or the Jesus who became man in order to share the anguish of his people or the Jesus who walked to Calvary for all people.

We are concerned about the President's discourse because of its dominant tone of repression and its silence with regard to the just demands that people are asking about. We have requested in a formal way an amnesty and a declaration of nullity with regard to the Law of Public Order and we also ask that the right of the *campesinos* to organize be affirmed. At the same time we are filled with hope by many of the philosophical concepts of the government which if carried out could open many doors that would lead to the resolution of many of our nation's problems. For example, we are encouraged by the philosophy of a true peace based on a foundation of justice and liberty and just laws. We are further encouraged by the humanization of wealth and by giving a social meaning to private property. All of this is magnificent! We applaud the participation of all Salvadorians in political service in a search for the common good and a respect for the interdependence of the different powers as well as a vision of the rural people as the center of gravity for an open political system. We also applaud the efforts to perfect the justice system and provide for an integral education and I am very encouraged to hear talk about emigration to friendly nations. I believe that God is not at fault here, for God has created the land for everyone. If here in El Salvador we are making God appear to be a liar because of the large tracts of land that are not utilized by anyone, then we, as a people, must look for ways to distribute the land in a more just manner so that people can own some land. As I have already said I am very happy to hear about the project of emigration to friendly lands, the full development of the human person, freedom of expression, etc. If Jesus were listening to these ideas he might well say: You have answered correctly; do this and you will live (2). There would be no conflict in our country if these doors were opened as a sincere expression of a desire to search for the common good. Following the exhortations of the Vatican Council (3), this is where the Church offers her collaboration. Indeed, the Church will never close herself to dialogue and cooperation and only requests that people show their sincerity by concrete acts and by a willingness to be open. Indeed, this is precisely what we wish to speak about today and we base our words on the word of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Life in our communities

But first of all I wish to highlight some aspects of the life of our communities. I want to speak about the events that occurred yesterday afternoon at 2:00pm in one of the Jesuit communities. Fifty to sixty members of the armed forces, fully armed, arrived in eight cars and a pick-up truck. The objective of this military operation was to search for arms. According to the armed forces, the Jesuits had been denounced for storing arms. Therefore, this operation appeared as though some military fort was about to be seized and thus every precaution had to be taken. The priests, who were engaged in after dinner conversation, facilitated the search of the premises. They allowed the military to enter every room of their house. Every corner was searched and nothing was found. The authorities have had the opportunity to verify the fact that these priests do not possess any arms. The power of these priests, like the power of every Christian, resides in their faith and love. But it is sad, nevertheless, that there is this type of mistrust among the members of the military.

We must state that the military forces were led by persons who had good knowledge of these types of operations. They conducted themselves as gentlemen, if we call entering someone's house and pointing rifles at people as though they were enemies a gentlemanly act. There were, however, no personal abuses but let us state clearly that as Church, these kinds of gestures do not help to create an atmosphere of trust. I want to congratulate the Jesuit Community in that house for their calmness and generosity in confronting this new trial of mistrust in their work. I take this opportunity to affirm the complete trust of the Church in her priests --- priests who are willing to be the object of conflicts and suspicions as they work, as Jesus invites us to work, for the authentic development of humankind.

I also want to congratulate the community of Tepecoyo where the Daughters of Charity have completed the construction of a beautiful church that we will bless at 2:00pm this afternoon.

At the same time I want to congratulate and communicate a greeting to all the women religious, those who are involved in traditional works of schools and hospitals, as well as those who are involved in direct pastoral ministry with the people --- this greeting comes from Cardinal Pironio, the Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for Religious¹⁰. He is a bishop from Latin America and I had the pleasure to spend some very memorable moments with him. He is a great friend and he told me: Three things are necessary for a religious community to be an authentic community of hope in the Church: 1) a great concern to love Jesus Christ, 2) fidelity to their founding charism, 3) --- and this is very important --- they make themselves available for the work in the local Church. A religious community of men or women who daily strive to love Jesus Christ in a more profound way and who attempt to be faithful to the mystique of their Congregation, but above all a community that places this love and mystique at the service of the people where they are ministering and do so in accord with the pastoral guidelines of the local bishop who shepherds this community --- tell these religious men and women that I rejoice with them even though they might be called communists, people of the Third World Movement, etc.

This Cardinal also told me: Don't worry. I am also called communist. I have just received a copy of a book entitled "Pironio, Pyromaniac" that refers to me as an incendiary and communist. I tell you that I am happy to have this honor of being referred to as a communist because this reference is often used for those individuals who are attempting to make real in Latin America the documents that were inspired by the Holy Spirit and that are called the Medellin Documents. A new path is being prepared that will enable the Church to move forward in this Divine sense, namely that path that is being prepared for in Puebla.

My sisters and brothers, I forgot to tell you that while I was in Rome I received a special invitation to participate in this meeting in Puebla¹¹ where I will have the pleasure of joining with the bishops in order to study and analyze the problems of Latin America.

Finally, I want to invite you to make these days of preparation for the celebration of our patron feast of Jesus, the Savior of the World, days of intense prayer. We will adorn the Cathedral in a beautiful manner but it is important that we become more devout during these days. Let us come together and visit the Divine Savior. Let us join together in pilgrimage and prepare to celebrate the 6th of August with a beautiful coming together of all the different communities in the Archdiocese. As we did last year, we will gather in the Park to honor, in the name of the whole nation, the Divine Savior of the World. As a practical way to demonstrate this homage, I ask you to continue to remember the efforts that we are making to

build the cathedral --- do not become discouraged in this effort. Thanks to God the work continues to move forward. The elegant lines of the dome that will crown this cathedral become more clearly outlined with the passing of each day. We are grateful for the help of all of you especially during this time of the feast of our Divine Patron.

I want to present my homily as a path of the mystery of salvation. A path that arises from God's initiative as that is explained as the integral redemption that is present in the midst of humanity, an integral redemption that can only be received by the simple and humble and not by the learned of this world. Therefore, I will present three ideas: 1) the initiative of God in this mystery of salvation; 2) what does salvation consist of --- and here I will speak of an integral salvation that embraces the body and the social relationships of men and women. Naturally what is most important is the salvation of one's soul and eternal life, but we must also integrate our earthly lives into this concept of salvation. 3) We must dispose ourselves toward this gift because not everyone receives this gift of God's salvation. Jesus said: *I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike* (4).

God's initiative

The first reading is a beautiful song that announces the arrival of the king. Rejoice heartily, O daughter Zion, shout for joy, O daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king shall come to you (5). This is a king who takes the initiative to come and visit humanity. Humanity rejoices not because they have invited this king but because the king has come to us. As Scripture tells us: In this is love, not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins (6). In the gospel Jesus speaks to us about the hidden mystery. We could not come to know this mystery unless God decided to reveal this to us, just as we cannot know what another person is thinking as long as that person maintains his thoughts and ideas in his mind. But when this person, on his own initiative says: I am going to tell you something. I want to communicate to you my thoughts, then we are able to understand what this person is thinking. So too God remained hidden until he decided to reveal himself and this is the mystery of salvation. In a clearer way Jesus says: No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him (7).

My sisters and brothers, be very careful with the gift of faith! Faith is a free gift. Blessed are those who have faith, not because they have merited this gift, but because God has given them this gift. Blessed are those who know Christ because no one knows Christ except the Father. Therefore those who come to a knowledge of Christ, participate in the knowledge of the Father. Those who are able to open their mouths and say with a pure conscience and love: *Our Father, in heaven!* (8) are blessed because they have faith and because they know that a Father exists whom no one knows unless it has been revealed to them by the Son.

You and I have come here this morning to participate in this Mass because we want to offer the sacrifice of Christ's body and blood in order to atone for the sins of the world and ask God to bless our families. As Jesus spoke to Peter, so too we could say that Jesus is speaking the same words to us concerning this knowledge: *Blessed are you, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father* (9). People do not have faith because of their own merits. All faith is a gift of God. Let us be thankful for this gift and not expose this gift to danger! Many people play with their faith and say: *I no longer believe; I*

no longer have faith. They would not say this unless they had faith. To desire faith is to possess it.

How sad that people do not even think of looking toward the heavens to discover the beauty of natural creation. Saint Paul told the Romans (10) that even though God has not revealed to them the profound mystery of his Divine Personality, nevertheless they are able to fathom this mystery through creation and the preservation of the world. Humanity is responsible for obtaining a glimpse of at least this natural faith: God exists before the sun existed and before the appearance of the flowers and the fruits at a specified time each year. What a marvelous order! A being exists who gives order and existence to all these things.

The Vatican Council (11) has also stated that beside all of this God desired to speak to us as friends and has told humanity that it is possible to enter into contact with God and participate in God's divine joy, and thus renews the hearts of humanity with the hope of another life, a life in God's kingdom in heaven that we pray will also become present here on earth. To work on behalf of this other life is to work for the Kingdom of God, a kingdom of greater justice and love among men and women. To work on behalf of this other life is work for faith and not only for the just demands of a liberation that is merely of this world. To work on behalf of this other life is also to work with the conviction that all those who have this faith in their hearts are already free. This was explained to me in a beautiful way in the Secretariat for Justice and Peace in Rome. They told us that we must plant this faith in people even if we do not pray for liberation in the social, political and economical order. This does not mean that we proclaim some form of conformity with the actual situation but rather we are telling people that if they believe and are people of faith, then they are already free. The Word of God no longer binds humanity to any form of slavery because now their hearts are filled with love and hope and freedom. Thus the people of El Salvador, despite so much suffering and oppression, are also free when they allow this gift of faith to be awakened in their hearts.

This is the freedom that the Church preaches. My sisters and brothers, in this sense we can all leave from this Cathedral or from the midst of those communities where the Church has invited people to come together to reflect on the Word of God --- we can all leave as free women and men. The Church has no scheme or system. The Church is unable to propose some political lines of action or hold forth one or another of the popular organizations. This does not fall within the scope of the Church's competency. Those popular organizations that tell Christians that they are not Christian unless they become members of FECCAS or UTC or ORDEN or any other organization, are lying and abusing the Church. The Church does not preach about any concrete system nor does the Church offer a methodology. The Church, however, does offer principles for a true freedom: believe in God the liberator. From that perspective, there will arise for each person their own free option. Every person is free to opt for the political path that they believe will be most beneficial for their country. They have the right to organize with others who think like themselves about the paths of true liberation.

God gives each person the gift of a profound faith and enables people to feel that there are no dead end streets. If men and women become enlightened, then the nation, no matter how dark its history might appear, will be able to follow the divine initiatives that will save the nation. Therefore, the first thing that I ask of the Lord is that all the people of El Salvador might be inspired during these days of preparation for our patronal feast and that we might be a people of faith --- the faith that is a gift of God and that, thanks to God, we were given when we were children (and hopefully we are not now playing with this gift of God).

What does God's offer consist of?

My dear sisters and brothers, in today's readings besides the divine initiative there also appears the question: what does this gospel consist of? *Gospel* here is understood in the sense that Saint Paul mentions (12): the power of God, the hidden mystery of God that is revealed, the mystery of salvation that is offered to humanity. What does this offer of God consist of? I want to be very clear in my language so that all of you can understand me, even the most simple person who is listening to me.

In the first place, this offer consists of knowledge. No one knows the Father except the Son (13) and no one knows the Son except the Father and those to whom the Father wishes to reveal this. Therefore, above all else this offer consists of knowledge. This, however, is not a knowledge of difficult theories. Naturally this theme is so profound that theologians continue to investigate this subject. At the same time it is so simple that Jesus tells us now: You have revealed these truths to the simple the humble but hidden them from the wise and the arrogant (14). My sisters and brothers, this is a knowledge that I and anyone of you, the most simple of all of you, are able to have, namely, that Christ, the Son of God, exists and that Christ came to reveal to us that God loves us and enables us to participate in the life of God. This Christ exists beyond our present history, in that definitive history where with open arms the Father awaits us and assures us that we are not alone in our moments of anguish. At our side is One who tells us: If you are sad or tired, come to me and I will help you. Experience this companionship and even though you do not see me know that I am very near to you.

God's offer also consists of the experience of contact with God. To experience the fact that Christ is not some distant, theoretical person but is one who is so present that he is inviting me to experience this presence in all the circumstances of my life with these pearls of the gospel that we have read today. Hopefully you will keep all of this throughout your life! Jesus says: those who feel tired, oppressed come to me and I will free you! I will give you rest! (15). Take the test, my sisters and brothers, take the test and, as the Council says, enter into this intimate sanctuary of your own conscience where God awaits you to dialogue with you. Tell him all your concerns and problems, and see how he will help you (16). He will do this at the same time that he respects your freedom, for you are the architect of your own destiny.

To experience God's presence, the presence of the One sent by the Father, the Eternal Word. My sisters and brothers, in the Council Documents we are able to discover this fullness of the Father's revelation when they wrote the following words: For He sent His Son, the eternal Word, who enlightens all men, so that He might dwell among men and tell them of the innermost being of God. Jesus Christ. Therefore, the Word made flesh, was sent as a man to men. He speaks the words of God, and completes the work of salvation which His Father gave Him to do. To see Jesus is to see His Father. For this reason Jesus perfected revelation by fulfilling it through his work of making Himself present and manifesting Himself: through His words and deeds, His signs and wonders, but especially through His death and glorious resurrection from the dead and final sending of the Spirit of truth. Moreover He confirmed with divine testimony what revelation proclaimed, that God is with us to free us from the darkness of sin and death, and to raise us up to life eternal (17).

What a wonderful reality to know that each time that we gather together to celebrate the Eucharist, Christ becomes present under the signs of bread and wine. Here I am speaking about this intimate life with God who from the perspective of this world invites us to be citizens and participants in the divine life. We do not have to wait for death in order to rejoice in this eternal happiness. All those who live holy Christian lives in this world are blessed and will live forever in heaven. For this reason I have said that true liberation is rooted there, in the hearts of women and men, where faith enables them to possess this divine life.

What else constitutes this offer of salvation? I exhort all of you to meditate on today's second reading which speaks about redemption. Saint Paul touches the very core of the debate that refers to the origins of the two great currents in humanity: good and evil. Evil has its origins in the flesh and good is rooted in the spirit. Today, Saint Paul speaks to us with great clarity: *you are not in the flesh; on the contrary, you are in the spirit for the Spirit of God dwells in you* (18). We continue our analysis and we see that we need to enter deeply into the theology of Saint Paul and the theology of the Bible in order to understand the biblical meaning of word *flesh*.

Flesh refers to the soft tissue that covers our bones and can also take on a very lofty meaning that is referred to in the Council documents when we are exhorted to honor our bodies: For this reason man is not allowed to despise his bodily life; rather he is obliged to regard his body as good and honorable since God has created it and will raise it up on the last day. Nevertheless, wounded by sin, man experiences rebellious stirrings in his body (19). Our human dignity exhorts us with our bodies to glorify God and at the same time warns us not to become enslaved by the depraved inclinations of our hearts. In the following paragraph from the Vatican Council I see the development of a whole biblical theology of the flesh. The flesh is a creature of God. God has created our bodies and has created our bodies in a marvelous way. The Council states: Though made of body and soul, man is one. Through his bodily composition he gathers to himself the elements of the material world; thus they reach their crown through him, and through him raise their voice in free praise of the Creator (20).

Yet this marvelous body, this work of God, this glorification of God has become a slave of passions because of sin. Thus we see that there is also a pejorative meaning of the word *flesh* --- at times *flesh* refers to the tendencies toward evil and in other circumstances can be understood as weakness and in another sense takes on the meaning of an addiction, for example, a love of drugs or liquor or food. Many people find the *flesh* pleasurable and forget about the spirit. But the flesh is human weakness and leads people toward sin. When the flesh is submitted to sin it then becomes an instrument of evil. But the flesh can be redeemed!

Indeed this is the power of redemption that Saint Paul speaks about: The flesh can also be redeemed for if by the spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. We must speak the same words as the Council (21): the whole person must be redeemed, body and soul, heart and conscience, mind and will. The whole person must be redeemed with all his/her social relations, the person who must care for creation, the person who has to administer according to God's law the material goods of this earth that God has created for all of humanity. The human person who is made in the image of God, though this person has become weak through sin, can nevertheless rely on redemption in the Spirit.

For the Sprit raised up the flesh of Jesus and made human flesh become an eternal youthful flesh in the glory of the resurrection. The body of every man and woman who desires to live according to the Spirit and not according to the flesh cries out and demands respect for human dignity. At this moment when the flesh seems to have dominion over people, especially over young people and married people and those who want to use things to satisfy the flesh, it would be good of these people to put the flesh under the dominion of the Spirit and thus become people who are truly redeemed in body and soul, wholly redeemed by the Spirit, redeemed with all their social relationships and with all of creation.

For creation has been made subject to the human person but there are persons who are dominated by the flesh and submit creation to sin --- these persons become selfish and idolaters. On the other hand, those who allow themselves to be dominated by the Spirit elevate with themselves all of nature and are able to rejoice in the good that God has created for the happiness of all. These people create a harmony here on earth that becomes a sign of a life to come where there will no longer exist *mine* and *yours*¹² but just the one will of the Father who makes all the children of God happy.

Who receives and who cannot receive this offer that God makes through his initiative

Therefore I end, brothers and sisters, with this third thought: who receives and who cannot receive this offer that God makes through his initiative. The word of God today is clear. It must have been a moment --- I was going to say, of disappointment --- when Christ saw the great crowds that followed him, but among them only simple people --- peasants and fishermen. If perchance any learned person drew near, he would see them withdraw with disdain, as though laughing at the teaching of that mad preacher. And when Christ was left alone, raising his eyes to his Father, he uttered the fondness, the sorrow, the affliction of his heart: Why, Father, when I have offered them a teaching so sublime, do some refuse to accept it from me and others, the simple, do accept it from me? I give you thanks, Father, for you have hidden these things from the learned and proud, and have revealed them to simple people. Yes Father, thus you have willed (22). The initiative is God's. Jesus Christ is not at fault, nor is the Church or the preacher. And when some would sneer that only simple people follow us, here in the gospel is the explanation.

As we reflect on the Word of God today we see that this word presents us with two groups of people. The first reading speaks about a king (Jesus) entering Jerusalem while riding on an ass, on a colt, the foal of an ass. He appears to be ridiculed but nevertheless this is a king who saves. As the prophet beholds the coming of this king he proclaims: *He shall banish the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem; the warrior's bow shall be banished and he shall proclaim peace to the nations* (23). The gospel compares the multitude of simple and humble people with those who are arrogant and proud, with those who are seen as great in the eyes of the world. God does not reject one group of people and prefer another group --- people themselves decide whether they will accept or separate themselves from God. Those who accept the Word of God become part of the remnant of Israel and others separate themselves from God when because of their pride they believe that the Church and Jesus are proclaiming foolishness and speak against this doctrine in a repugnant manner and justify all of this as unworthy of the wise of this world. For this reason, my sisters and brothers, those persons who are humble and those who are the little ones are truly blessed.

How I would like for everyone who is participating in this reflection on the Word of God to resolve to root out from their hearts all pride and arrogance and self-sufficiency! How I

would like for everyone to be grateful for this gift of salvation that comes from God! Indeed this offer of salvation can only be experienced by those who, like beggars, extend their hands and experience poverty. It is in this sense that we say that the Church is a Church of the poor --- here we do not refer to those of low economic status who are ambitious or those who lack material goods and as a consequence abduct people in order to rob and steal money or those criminals who take out their resentments of hatred against others whom they abuse. Once again we say NO to all forms of terrorism. But we affirm the attitude of poverty that is spoken about in today's Scripture readings: Rejoice O daughter Jerusalem (24). Who here does not honor the name of Mary, the daughter of Zion, the one who incarnates true poverty, the humble virgin who says that in the eyes of God she is nothing yet the One who is mighty has done great things for her and from now on all ages will call her blessed (25)? My sisters and brothers, this is the true poverty of the Church and I have tried to proclaim to you this attitude of poverty. This poverty enables us to find strength in our weakness and sin because we seek support from Christ's mercy which is the Lord's power. The Church does not seek support for her power from the powerful of this earth or from political organizations. Rather the Church honorably renounces these powers in order to walk in the embrace of the crucified Lord who gives her true power. This attitude of poverty is proclaimed to those who have and those who have not --- we invite everyone to have a spirit of poverty, a spirit of renunciation. a spirit that allows them to extend their arms and entrust everything to the Lord. We ask people to put aside, and no longer place their trust in, the false idols of this earth.

My dear sisters and brothers, this is the wonderful message that is communicated to us this morning and it is a very timely message in light of the realities that we have experienced during the past week. We are well aware of the poverty of our own lives, and the present situation in which so many people are unable to find work, yet in face of these realities we do not live with a conformity that allows us to cross and fold our arms. We must continue to struggle with the power of faith, a power that finds its support in God. Let us then draw near to the altar of God! Let us join ourselves to the sacrifice of Christ, the one is poor par excellence, the one who being rich suffered greatly, the one who hung naked on cross and died in need of everything! Let us live that true poverty which we find when we seek refuge in God! *Oh God in you I have placed all my trust, I do not fear* (26). This then is the Eucharist that we are going to celebrate --- the Eucharist of the poor, the Eucharist of those who trust in God, the Eucharist of those who do not hate but know how to forgive. Let us raise up our voices and let each one of us, like the Lord's humble ones, pray that we might acquire from God that wealth which is denied to the proud and arrogant but bestowed upon those who are simple and humble.

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¹ "El arzobispo de San Salvador a quienes saben del paradero del señor Matsumoto", *La Prensa Gráfica*, 3 July 1978.

² The Armed Forces of National Resistence (FARN) demanded the freedom of 38 political prisoners as the condition for freeing Mr Mat5sumoto. See *La Prensa Gráfica*, 24 May 1978.

³ A traditional principle of moral theology, based on Romans 3,8.

⁴ See "Goodness overcomes cruelty and violence", Allocution of Paul VI, 22 June 1978, *Osservatore Romano*, 2 June 1978.

⁵ Letter of Paul VI to the "men of the Red Brigade", requesting the freedom of the Italian statesman Aldo Moro, *Osservatore Romano*, 30 April 1978.

⁶ See Pius XII, With open heart, Radio message on the vigil of Christmas, 24 December 1955.

⁷ "Vaticano dice son difíciles relaciones Iglesia-Estado", *La Prensa Gráfica*, 3 July 1978.

⁸ Fr Hermógenes López was assassinated in Guatemala 30 June 1978. See *Orientación*, 16 July 1978.

Marginal References (1) Mt 11,28: (2) Lk 10,28: (3) GS 76: (4) Mt 11,25: (5) Za 9,9: (6) 1Jn 4,10: (7) Mt 11,27: (8) Mt 6,9: (9) Mt 16.17: (10) Rm 1,20: (11) DV 2: (12) Rm 1,16: (13) Mt 11,27: (14) Mt 11,25: (15) Mt 11,28: (16) GS 16: (17) DV 4: (18) Rm 8,9: (19) GS 14: (20) GS 14: (21) GS 3: (22) Mt 11,25-26: (23) Za 9,10: (24) Za 9,9: (25) Lk 1,48-49: (26) Ps 31,2.

⁹ "Mensaje al pueble salvadoreño del Señor Presidente de la República, general Carlos Humberto Romero, en su primer año de Gobierno (1 July 1978). See *La Prensa Gráfica*, 6 July 1978. Passages between commas are subtitles or quotations from the discourse.

¹⁰ Correctly, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes.

¹¹ From 1975, Mons. Romero was consultor of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America and for this reason was invited to the Third Generaal Conference of Latinamerican Bishops in Puebla. See *Osservatore Romano*, 1 October 1978.

¹² See St John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles*, VII,2; PG 60, 65-66.