

# SOWING THE WORD OF THE KINGDOM

**Fifteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time**  
**July 16, 1978**

**Readings:**

*Isaiah 55:10-11*

*Romans 8:18-23*

*Matthew 13:1-23*

My sisters and brothers, the very gospel that we have just heard provides us with picturesque framework for our homily. I imagine the multitude gathered here in the Cathedral and the groups gathered around their radios listening to YSAX., yet at the same time I also imagine that there is another anonymous group of people gathered together in remote villages or perhaps, hiding and inquiring what the Archbishop is going to say? This is the multitude that followed Christ in this rural setting by the side of the lake; this is the multitude that listened to Jesus as he preached to them from the boat.

How simple is Jesus! What beautiful scenes from nature were utilized in his preaching! How beautiful are the fields of El Salvador especially now that thanks to God the rains have fallen and we are now able to offer our corn and harvest to the Lord. The Teacher, viewing this panorama, is inspired to communicate to us one of his most beautiful parables: the parable of the sower.

I entitle this homily: *sowing the word of the Kingdom* and I want to present three ideas: 1) the Word of the Kingdom is the seed; 2) the proclamation of this Word is the process of sowing and we call this process evangelization; 3) the harvest of this process of sowing, of this evangelization is the integral salvation of humanity and the world.

## **Events of the church**

Before developing these thoughts I want to dedicate my humble words and your attention to our Lady of Mount Carmel. Today, July 16<sup>th</sup>, our people honor Mary under the title of Our Lady of Mount Carmel with a great popular devotion. Today I want to act in solidarity with the multitudes of pilgrims who from so many villages and towns carry banners in honor of the Virgin as they celebrate this feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. From this Cathedral I want to express my solidarity with these gracious demonstrations in honor of Our Lady.

Yesterday the Carmelite Sisters of Saint Joseph consecrated two new religious sisters to the Virgin. The Superior General of this Congregation told me how the Lord has blessed them with so many vocations. Truly the Novices who produced the fruit of these two professions and the Postulants --- these women are a great hope for a Congregation that is involved in an authentic Salvadorian process of sowing. Today the Carmelites of Saint Theresa are celebrating the anniversary of the consecration of their chapel in the Divina Providencia Hospital. Two of the Sisters also celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of their profession. I also want to express my gratitude to the Carmelite Fathers for their ministry in the parish of Del Carmen in La Colonia Roma --- they are providing a very valuable collaboration there. I am also grateful for the ministry of the Carmelities in the Colegio Santa

Teresa in La Gruta and to the Carmelite Communities that have dedicated themselves to the work of human promotion in Colonia Utila in Santa Tecla and Hogar Santa Teresita in Apulo, as well as the Carmelites who are ministering in Guazapa, Ciudad Barrios and those involved in direct pastoral work in so many other parishes and villages and hermitages where today they are all celebrating their patronal feast and honoring Our Lady of Mount Carmel. I highlight here the parish of Nuestra Señora de la Merced located here in San Salvador where an image that was crowned with the authority of the Pope is venerated. This is a treasure of popular devotion to our Lady of Mount Carmel and this same devotion is seen in the many Confraternities that have arisen during the course of centuries. We therefore join these reflections to the loving devotion of the people and the religious and priestly life of the Carmelites.

The boat from which Jesus speaks to the people of all ages is of symbol of the Church --- this Church. Therefore the actions of the Church also have to provide a framework for this homily. The Bishops of San Salvador met together as an Episcopal Conference to deal with matters of a general nature: the seminary and preparations for the meeting in Puebla. We also engaged in an in-depth analysis of the social, political and economic reality of our country. In light of these realities that are of interest to all of you, my dear sisters and brothers, I want to tell you that those of you who are so scandalized by the lack of unity among the bishops, please learn how to live in a way that is better than the human sins of the Church. Learn how to love the Church, not because of the good example of the priests but because you continue to mature in your knowledge. In the gospel when Jesus spoke about the priests of his time he encouraged the people with the following words: *do and observe all things whatsoever they tell you, but do not follow their example. For they preach but do not practice what they preach* (1). If we should unfortunately give you bad example, do not use this bad example as a pretext to say that the whole world is becoming Protestant. Today's parable provides us with a wonderful response when we come face to face with people who are inconsistent in their practice of faith. We must rise above human defects for there will come a time when each of us will be asked to make an accounting of our actions. Let us view the hierarchy, despite their defects, as the responsible pastors for this flock of Christ's Church. Let us pray for these pastors. Instead of separating ourselves from the faith, let us become more concerned for those matters in which the Church is involved, for example, the seminary, the process of evangelization that will be studied in the meeting in Puebla, the problems that surround the Church as she illuminates the realities of the world, etc. These things are of interest to us. Therefore, my sisters and brothers, let us mature in our faith. I beg you to rise up to those heights where Christ is the true shepherd, the true bishop of our souls. Thus as we, bishop, priests, religious and faithful, focus our eyes on Christ, let us become his humble followers and preachers.

Within this framework of the Church, I rejoice with the community of Tepecoyo where last Sunday we blessed a beautiful Church and admired the pastoral ministry of the Daughters of Charity. It seemed as though all the Daughters from the various houses in El Salvador were present at this beautiful celebration. During the homily it was wonderful to be able to thank them for their work and in the spirit of Saint Vincent de Paul, to guide the Daughters in the work they are developing there.

I also had the opportunity to visit the community of Cojutepeque and view the progress of the construction of the new church there. I traveled there to look for a house that would serve as a center for the work in that city and thanks to God and the generosity of a very benevolent woman I believe this project will become a reality.

In our newspapers this week we saw the publication of a statement by the Jesuits, commenting on the search of their house which I referred to last Sunday. I would like to highlight the following sections of their statement: *In searching our house, the security forces attempted to justify their action by saying that this occurred because of the present situation of our nation.* The Jesuits stated: *It is precisely this situation of our nation that appeared to embarrass the police who searched the house of the Jesuits that gives great significance to actions such as this. This situation seems to take place at every level but especially among the campesinos and the oppressed classes. Beside the deficient and ominous structures, we also confront organized campaigns of insults and slander. It is upsetting to see how the government can tolerate these campaigns that seem like drains into which all forms of resentment are discharged. Yet this situation has become the law of public order. The human blindness of a few, the irrational violence against the humble and especially those who truly desire to serve the people, be they priests or religious, campesinos or intellectuals --- this situation foment and increases the climate of anguish and collective panic. Today our country lives in an atmosphere of fear and this fear penetrates every area of life.<sup>1</sup>* If you have not read this statement, I recommend that you read this courageous and just statement of the Jesuits. Other elements of the Church have expressed their solidarity with the statement and have also expressed their outrage at this injustice of searching and treating priests as suspects of storing arms in their house especially when these priests minister to the people in faith and in the search for justice. My sisters and brothers, I will speak about other events later in my homily.

### **The word of God is a seed**

I told you that my first reflection is to consider the Word of God as the seed. Do not allow this phrase that we proclaim every Sunday during our celebration: *the Word of God*, do not allow these words to become a routine response. Inspired by the beautiful parable of the sower, I am happy to have this opportunity to explain briefly the theology of the Word of God.

In the first reading, Isaiah compares the Word of God to the rain (2). Last night as I reflected on this idea, it seemed to me that the language of Isaiah was truly marvelous for he spoke about the experience of feeling the soft rain fall and moisten the earth. The prophet says that the Word of God is like the rain, for it enables a process of germination to take place. But the gospel knows that the rain would be useless unless a seed were planted in the earth. Thus two things, no, three things are necessary: the rain, the seed, the earth. Without these elements there is neither germination nor a harvest. Let us focus on that which is primary: the seed.

When Paul VI talked about the renewal of the Church and stated that this was the goal of the Second Vatican Council, he explained very well that renewal does not mean accommodating the Church to the world's modern ways which at times are unchristian. Renewal means making the Church consistent with the seed that was planted. A tree, however much it grows, remains consistent with its seed. Therefore, it is important to understand that God's Word is a seed, and it cannot be altered. Perhaps we would like a teaching that is more accommodated to our interests. Perhaps we would like a preaching that is not so disturbing and that does not cause conflicts. But when Christ planted the seed, he had conflicts. That seed is the Word of the Just One, of the Holy One, of One who knows

what he wanted when he created humanity and nature. Therefore this seed guides us but it collides with sin. It clashes with those who do not want the seed to grow.

In the Old Testament, when you read the book of Genesis, God spoke his *word*, and this word was not a lie like many of the words that are spoken today. Rather God spoke a powerful word, a word that was identical with his speech and will and action. *God said, "Let there be light," and there was light* (3).

This is the meaning of *the word* in the Bible. This is clearly seen when the Bible refers to a person's name... *I give you the name...* (4) This does not refer to naming a person as we do, giving a child the name John or Frederick or whatever. In the Bible, naming a person implied expressing the vocation of that person.

In the book of Exodus, the Word of God that created the world now guides the steps of Moses and thus a new perspective is given to *the word*. The Word of God is creative but it is also a saving word. My sisters and brothers, this is important for the salvation that Christ offers the world, the salvation that was announced by God, the word that redeemed the world --- this word is in the same line as the word that creates. Creation and redemption are works of the Word of God. To desire creation, fields, cattle, ranches apart from Christ's redemption is to desire a utopia, an impossibility. The God who created the cattle, the God who created the ranches and the fields is the same God who in Christ demands justice, the same God who redeems, the same God who demands greater justice among men and women, the same God who punished Pharaoh because he would not free the oppressed people of Israel.

This is the Word of God that creates and redeems, that creates history and in history, brings salvation. How consoling! For the God to whom we pray *our Father...*(5) is a God who became incarnate in our hunger, in our reality, and in our creation. Our God is concerned about our bodies and our nourishment. Our God redeems us spiritually but also redeems us bodily and socially. Our God is creating history --- the history of El Salvador, the history of the Church. When the Church speaks about the history of El Salvador, she is not meddling in politics but reminding people that the God of our history is the God who speaks to the Church and demands that the politics, the sociology and the things of nature of El Salvador be structured in conformity to this Word that has created these material goods so that all might be happy. God desires neither class struggle nor selfishness.

The Word of God becomes especially significant when the prophets are sent to the kings and the people and say: *thus says the Lord* (6). In those situations the Word of God becomes a demand, a denunciation and a praise of virtue. The vocation of the prophet is to communicate the divine will. Christ entrusted this prophetic mission to his Church and therefore from the pulpit of this Cathedral and from the pulpits of all our churches we must proclaim: *thus says the Lord*. The people must obey not because they follow the Archbishop but because the Archbishop is a humble messenger of the Lord's word.

In the New Testament *the word* takes on a more profound theological significance. On the lips of Jesus the Word achieves its most profound depths for the word is Good News, the news of salvation (7). The Kingdom of God has arrived and Jesus as a person not only speaks the Word of God but is the Word of God, is the Word *who became flesh and made his dwelling among us* (8). In the New Testament the Word of God does not only create, preserve and guide the world, but in the God-made-man the Word takes on a teaching dimension.

It is because of this teaching dimension of the Word that I said before that the framework of our homily is most beautiful. The Jesus who gets into a boat and teaches the multitude that had gathered by the sea (9) is God who is teaching the people in the Aramaic language so that he can be understood by his listeners. On Pentecost, he spoke in many different languages (10) and now he speaks in Spanish --- through his priests he continues to speak to his people in the Church.

Since Christ is the Word of God, Saint Paul is able to refer to Jesus with a very original phrase: *Jesus is the Yes and the Amen of the promises* (11). In other words, everything that God promised us in the Old Testament Christ affirms, he says *yes, this is the truth. I am the God made man. Amen means so be it.* Jesus is the consummation of what God has said. This means that we must make an act of faith in order to believe that everything that God had promised in reference to salvation and faithfulness has become incarnated in Christ --- Christ is the *Amen*, the *yes* to God's promises. God is the saving power of the world, the Savior of the world: *I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness* (12). *I am the truth and apart from me there is no truth. All of those who oppose me or separate themselves from me remain in their lies. I am the light. I am the Truth. I am the Way. I am God who dwells among you. I am the saving power. Blessed are those who embrace me with faith, who love me and follow me* (13).

How wonderful it is to be a Christian, to truly embrace the Word of the incarnate God and make Jesus' saving power a part of ourselves! How wonderful it is to hope even when everything seems to be lost! Therefore, my sisters and brothers, my greatest satisfaction and joy in my work here in the Cathedral and in my Episcopal ministry is when I hear people tell me (as I heard during this week on various occasions) that we communicate to them a sense of hope, that we awaken in them a sense of hope. We give them this hope, they tell me, even when we do not provide them with political options. Some say that they do not feel called to participate in the political arena but they are working for a better world because in their hearts they nourish this faith and hope in Christ. Yet if people, with a perspective of embracing Christ in Christian faith, feel called to the political vocation, then they have a right to go out and become involved in the political arena. They must, however, do this under the inspiration of this *Amen*, this *Yes*, this *Way* that offers salvation to our people and apart from whom there can be no salvation.

This Christ, this saving power of the incarnate God, this Jesus who died on the cross and was raised to new life, this Jesus who will die no more, has bestowed upon this world an institution that is called the Church. Let us not tarnish this figure of the Church that has undertaken the same mission as Jesus Christ. All the power of God incarnated in Christ has been given to the Church. *Go out into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe, will be condemned* (14). When the apostles wrote or preached they were aware of the fact that they were humble followers who were inspired by the revelation of the One who came to save the world.

Thus we can say that the Bible preserves the Word of God. But the Bible alone is not enough, for it is also necessary that with the Bible, the Church takes up this Word and makes this Word a living Word. It is not enough to recite psalms and parables from memory --- the Word must be applied to the present concrete life where this Word of God is proclaimed. The Bible is the source of this revelation, the source for this Word of God that is preserved.

But this source of the Word is useless unless we allow it to penetrate our hearts and apply it to the needs of our homes. If we use our Bibles only to read them, if we interpret the text in a literal sense according to the traditions and customs of the time in which these books were written, then we have a dead Bible. We might call this literalism or fundamentalism but this is not God's revelation.

Therefore, while our Protestant sisters and brothers criticize us because we apply the Word of God to the current circumstances of our time and our country, they wall themselves up behind a preaching that is spiritualistic and detached from the realities in which they live, at times even deceitful and untruthful. We see this occur in some of the large healing ceremonies --- this is not the true Word of God but the word of men and women, the word of charlatans, the word of people who want to accommodate the Word to their own way of life and/or thinking. We should not be surprised that the government is supporting these campaigns of our separated sisters and brothers, for if their preaching disturbs no one then blessed be this form of Christianity that does not touch the wounds of our society! But a preaching that proclaims the Word of God and says: *thus says the Lord* and says this is God's Word that must be lived today, such preaching will always disturb people.

My sisters and brothers, when we refer to the Word of God as a seed we also imply that the seed has the potential to produce life. It is for this reason that the Church takes up, applies, and lives this Word in the celebration of the sacraments. The sacraments are another dimension of the Word of God. We have moved beyond that former distinction that was made between evangelization and sacramentalization. Unfortunately we have sacramentalized people without integrating the Word of God into this process. Thanks be to God for now we demand sacramental preparation. Please be attentive to the need to participate in the baptismal preparation because only when people understand a sacrament as the Word of God, only when people understand the sacraments as a part of God's revelation, only then does it make sense to pour water over a child at the baptismal font. Without evangelization, what sense does this make? Why bring a child to the Bishop to have him mark one's forehead with the Sign of the Cross and with the oil of chrism and touch one's cheek, if one does not know what the gospel says about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in this sacrament of Confirmation? What sense does it make for a man and woman to receive the sacrament of matrimony, but do so as a social act and do not understand the great mystery that Saint Paul explains in the Bible when he speaks about the marriage between Christ and his Church, when he speaks about the fact that Christ died for the Church, for the Church that lives faithfully united to Christ? The sacraments without the gospel, the sacraments without the Word of God become magic, a custom, a routine or a family tradition. People baptize their children because everyone else in the family is baptized. Few people say that they baptize their children because they want them to become Christian.

In this sense, then, we can say that the sacraments are a dimension of the *seed*, of the Word. For example, let us look at the grace of God in the Eucharist. People do not come here simply to listen to a discourse. I would never be content if this were the reason to proclaim the homily. When I pronounce the words of the homily, in my conscience I know that this is my pastoral duty and I also know that my homily ought to bring this people to the altar where, through faith, they will experience this Jesus, this Word that I have proclaimed, this Word that has been prepared to speak, to sanctify, to redeem, and to become life for those who receive communion or worship Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Each Sunday the Eucharist cannot be separated from the Word of God. After the homily we approach the altar and there in the Body and Blood of Christ we worship this Word that has become silent

because this Word has entered the depths of the hearts of all those who have reflected on the Word of God, who have placed all their trust in him, and who make him present in our society.

When the Church preaches and says: *thus says the Lord*, it might be asked: are we foolish or crazy? How can we say such a thing? My sisters and brothers, these are very interesting questions and we must understand that the Spirit that inspired Jesus, the Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead and gave him eternal life, this Spirit of God is the same Spirit that on the night of the resurrection Jesus breathed forth upon his Church and told his apostles: *Receive the Holy Spirit* (15). On Pentecost, in the form of wind and tongues of fire, the Church was filled with this Spirit (16) and thanks to the life of Christ in the Holy Spirit the Church continues to preach the Word of God.

How different it is to preach here, at this moment, than to speak as friends with any one of you! At this moment, I know that I am being an instrument of the Spirit of God in his Church. I know that I am guiding people and I can say like Christ: *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor* (17). The same Spirit that gave life to Christ and gave strength to his body born of the Virgin, so that he could be the sacrificial victim for the salvation of the world, is the very same Spirit that also gives power and inspiration to my throat, to my tongue, and to my feeble limbs. This same Spirit of God gives you, the People of God, the ability to hear God's Word as it should be heard. I know that many do not hear me with this supernatural Spirit. Of them I can say, as in the parable, they are like the seed that falls on the highway and the evil one comes and takes it away (18). But I know that many do listen to me, and as we heard in the parable today, they are like the earth that receives the seed (19), and the Spirit of God gives that earth, which is your hearts, the ability to hear supernaturally, the grace to be able to listen. So as I told you, the preacher not only teaches, but learns. You teach me. Your attention is also for me the Holy Spirit's inspiration. Your rejection would be for me God's rejection. That is why I told you that people have a sense of infallibility, called the sense of faith. The Holy Spirit gives this gift to even the humblest woman among the people. Indeed, this gift is given to everyone, so that when they listen to a bishop or a priest they can discern. You can at least suspect: *that teaching must not be from the gospel!*

But when I see such attention, such faith, and especially such conversion, people seeking the Church and seeking God, then I say with joy: *the finger of God is here*. At this moment when we must apply the Word of God, I bring before you the denunciations and the joy that we must proclaim. For example, I take advantage of this celebration of the Word of God, this Word that here has become our Word, for on this 16<sup>th</sup> of July God is talking to me. The Council stated (20) that the People of God, illuminated by faith, can examine their aspirations, their demands and ideals, and as people of faith they will be able to discern, through the signs of the times, what God desires. True, not everything that humanity demands is the Word of God, but beneath all of these demands of the present moment, there God can be found in different ways and therefore we are called to enter into a process of discernment.

### **Events of the week**

Thus when in the light of God's Word I point out to you some of the events of the past week, you are able to discover where God is and where Satan is. You are able to discover the presence of the Lord who leads his people along the paths of goodness and you are able to see

where God is rejected and thus become aware of the people who do not desire Christ's salvation.

I want you to be aware of the fact that the Word that the Church preaches and the concrete events that are pointed out --- this does not only occur here but takes place throughout the Latin American Continent. Seventy members of the hierarchy, cardinals, archbishops and bishops, have met in Bogotá and gathered together the concerns of our continent, concerns that were expressed during the consultation process in preparation for the study of all of this during the October meeting of the bishops in Puebla. In the study that the bishops have prepared they refer to a disproportionate social injustice that is reflected especially in the concentration of wealth in the hands of just a few people. They said that ten percent of the population in Latin America has accumulated great wealth while the larger part of the population endures every type of need. Surely the bishops will be called communists but I say they are expressing the Church's reflection.

These bishops who represent the Latin American Episcopacy also speak about the lack of employment and failure to pay just wages and as a result of this situation there has been a dramatic increase in juvenile delinquency. If there is terrorism then yes, this must be eradicated, but not by repression. The unjust and disordered structures from which terrorist violence springs forth must be changed. The bishops also refer to the unjust social order in which the hemisphere is submerged, a social order that can provoke violent reactions of the masses against those who are privileged. They speak about multinational corporations that have not benefited the Latin American countries but rather have been a source of corruption and immorality even in the countries where they have their home offices. The Church expresses her concern for the propagation of military dictatorships in Latin America, but also points out that the corruption and inability of the traditional political organizations to establish democracy has enabled these military dictatorships to seize control of the government. The bishops also stated the military regimes frequently violate human rights even though they admit in the same document that the Church has been able to operate with a fair degree of freedom. Thanks to God, the Church in El Salvador can speak and we pray that this voice of the Church can continue to speak out. When the Church speaks, she must proclaim the truth, otherwise it would be better for her to remain silent. The Church always expresses her concern for the obstacles that have been placed in the paths of workers who try to organize themselves in unions. This is occurring in many places in Latin America but especially in those places that are governed by the military.

Here in our own country we have concrete cases that confirm this statement of the Latin American hierarchy. The search of the house of the Jesuits last Saturday is not an isolated case but one that occurs frequently in the city and in the rural areas and has contributed to the creation of a climate of fear and insecurity. On July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 500 commandos occupied the village of Rio Seco and searched all the houses. On July 4<sup>th</sup> searches were conducted in Jocoaitique, Torola and El Transito --- people were beaten and there are reports that the houses of defenseless persons were robbed. On July 6<sup>th</sup> in the village of Cacao de Cinquera two *campesinos* were taken prisoners and only after four days in captivity were they brought before the courts.

The anguished cries of Mrs. Matsumoto are not heard. It is unjust and painful that the cries of mothers who have engaged in a hunger strike are also not heard. The Church, which was asked to collaborate with these mothers, together with the Red Cross and Human Rights Council brought one of the mothers engaged in this strike who was dying to a medical center.



The labor conflicts that the bishops spoke about during their meeting in Colombia are realities here in El Salvador. Conflicts have still not been resolved in INDECA, CEL, COPLASA, IRA, Minas de San Sebastian, Minas de San Cristobal, SACOS, Cuscatlan, Iusa, Guantes, Diana, Refineria Salvadoreña de Azucar, Corcho y Lata, etc.

We also want to support the petition that one of the political parties presented to the Supreme Court of Justice against the procedures of the judges in First Criminal Court, procedures that even violate the guarantees of the Law of Public Order. This petition states that the accused are denied assistance in their defense, processes are delayed and prisoners are illegally detained. No justice has been extended to those prisoners who have denounced in open court acts of torture by the security forces and paramilitary forces. The political party that has presented this petition asks for a thorough investigation of these acts, the punishment of those culpable and the cessation of these violations<sup>2</sup>. I believe that this is a very just demand and is also very much in line with the words that the Church proclaimed on Pentecost, namely, that it is time for the Supreme Court to look at these anomalies and correct them --- the honor of our country is at stake.

I want to tell the *campesinos* that new salaries have been approved. For male workers sixteen years or older the new salary is \$4.25; for female workers 16 years and older, and for minors of both sexes and handicapped workers the new salary is \$3.65<sup>3</sup>. I must admit that I continue to be surprised by the discrimination against women who receive the same salary as minors and handicapped workers. Why do they not have the same right to a salary of \$4.25?

Our Church is also pleased with the attitude of the Bishops of Panama who criticized the defects of the actual structures of the Panamanian Government. They spoke about the need to form a new, more just social order according to the national will of the people, a new order that eliminates the structures of exploitation of one person by another, a new order where people are able to find new social-economic structures. The Panamanian Bishops pointed out that among the serious defects of the actual political structure is the lack of a clear and decisive separation among the three branches of government, the lack of an efficient political administration, little representation in the electoral system of the representatives of the different districts who in turn elect the president. They go on to state that it is unacceptable that certain Marxist factions pretend to set themselves up as the political voice of both the government and the nation. I want to congratulate Archbishop McGrath and all the beloved bishops of Panama for this attitude, which as you can see, is not something that is foreign to us. We rejoice to see this affirmation of the Church's pastoral guidelines in our Latin American Continent.

We also rejoice at the fact that in our communities, our newspapers and our radio transmissions, people have expressed their solidarity with our beloved Father Hermógenes López, who is truly a martyr. He was assassinated by the bullets of the powerful for having defended the right of his people to have access to water.

As we speak about all these events, there are also encouraging signs. This morning I do not want to pass over this event and therefore I invite all of you to pray for the eternal rest of Don Fernando Levy. This man died on July 9<sup>th</sup> in El Balsamat, Department of La Libertad as he saved the lives of some small children who were caught up in the tide of the ocean. Thank God for these expressions of goodness and heroism. These gestures fill us with hope for here in El Salvador there are people with good hearts who will enable this seed of God to prevail.

Therefore as you can see the Word of God confronts actual situations and for this reason I said that we must allow the Word of God to illuminate the concrete realities in which our people live.

### **The proclamation of this word which is seed is called evangelization**

This leads me to my second reflection: the process of sowing and planting. I tell you that this is one of the great concerns of the Church: evangelization. One of the Council documents and a World Synod of Bishops have studied this process of evangelization and in Puebla, the bishops will come together to study the document: *Evangelization at Present and in the Future of Latin America*.

It is a shame that time passes so quickly my sisters and brothers but I would like to present to you the wonderful synthesis of Pope Paul VI when he wrote about evangelization after listening to the voices of the bishops from throughout the world who gathered in Rome for the Synod of 1974. In this document (21), which I encourage everyone to read, especially those who participate in the Base Communities of Faith, the Pope asks: *What is evangelization?* The Pope states that this is a very complex and dynamic reality. One must look at all the dimensions of this process of evangelization in order to understand the meaning of this dynamic. He proposed the following elements:

First (22), bring the Good News to all people in the world so that this Word of God becomes a leaven in every culture and converts, individually and collectively, the consciences of men and women. The proclamation of the Good News will enable people to adopt criteria --- not criteria of the world or even criteria of justice --- but gospel criteria. This is the first meaning of evangelization, namely, to bring the criteria of Christ to humanity thus enabling people to renew their commitment.

Second (23), a life of witness. Evangelizing is not just saying words. Preaching is relatively easy, but to live out what is preached --- as I told the Holy Father in Rome, to respect the teaching of the Holy See, of the *magisterium*, to praise them, extol them, defend them theoretically is very easy; but when one tries to incarnate that teaching and give it life in a diocese, in a community, and point out concrete events that are against the teaching --- then conflicts arise. And this is the life of our archdiocese, my dear sisters and brothers, because not all are willing to live a commitment to witness; not all suffer persecution, and it is easy to say there is no persecution. But every priest, religious, and lay person who wants to announce Christ's gospel in truth must suffer persecution. The witness of life is necessary. Here I make an appeal that all your lives and mine become in truth a life of silent preaching. This is the lived gospel, for we become contradictory signs if we preach beautiful sermons and then do not live that which we preached. In a private conversation the Pope told me: *we are not satisfied with simply preaching, with proclaiming words but it is necessary to live what we preach*. My sisters and brothers, help me with your prayers so that I can give this witness of life as I speak God's word.

Third (24), the third element of this process of evangelization or sowing is the need for an explicit proclamation. It is not enough to give good example and then be silent when one should speak. One must speak. Indeed, it is necessary to proclaim the content of God's revelation. It is necessary to proclaim the fact that God loves us, that God wants us to be good Christians, that Christ died for the truth and for justice, and that Christ's redemption has

certain consequences in the area of liberation. The Papal document *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (25) contains a beautiful doctrine concerning true liberation, a liberation that the Church cannot ignore. The document then speaks about a vital acceptance of belonging to a community of believers (26). In other words, we are not embarrassed by the Church but rather we accept the sacraments of the Church as a sign of our membership in the Church. Notice how the Pope breaks this separation between evangelization and sacraments when he says: *the sacraments become the seal of evangelization* (27). When people listen to the gospel but do not participate in the sacraments, they are not truly evangelized. But when here in this Cathedral we see people who reflect on the Word of God and then are nourished by the Eucharist, when we see people who are truly sorry for their sins and have been restored to God's grace, when we see people who were living together and then come before the Church and ask for God's blessing on their union, when we see people trying to overcome their addiction to alcohol and drugs and their involvement in prostitution, when we see people truly trying to open themselves to receive God's grace, then we know that we have achieved an evangelization that is in conformity with the Laws of God.

My sisters and brothers, we must also speak about a new impulse to evangelize (28). Those people who have been evangelized must go out and evangelize others. The community is evangelized in order to evangelize others. The Base Community of Faith must be a group that reflects on the Word of God so that the members of this community can live that Word in a better way. Thus this community of faith will be able to transmit and radiate this Word. The place to accomplish all of this is in the home, in our marriages and in our community. We must all be apostles and sowers. *A sower went out to sow the seed* (29). All of us should see these words that we have been reflecting on as a reference to ourselves.

### **The harvest of this seed is the integral salvation of mankind and the world**

Finally, my sisters and brothers --- I am going to conclude --- my third idea is perhaps the most encouraging one that is found in today's readings. The second reading from Saint Paul's letter to the Romans speaks about the harvest and the glorification that one day will be given to us --- a glorification that is superior to all the pains and sufferings that can be felt on this earth. The other day I heard these words of Saint Paul translated to the suffering of a tortured man who was kept three days with his fingers bound. As he suffered he said: *the hope that I have and the glory that I await are greater than these sufferings* (30). Take heart, you who are persecuted! Take heart, you who are tortured! Take heart, all you who hope for a better land and see no horizon! Your suffering is the condition of redemption that was gained only by Christ being nailed to a cross. But after the crucifixion came the resurrection. Despite his apparent failure, in Christ's heart the certainty never died that the world would be redeemed. We as Christians will not fail for we bear the Spirit that raised Jesus to new life.

We see another fruit of this harvest revealed in this world, in this creation that is subject to all humanity and that Saint Paul refers to in a tragic way when he wrote the following words that we heard proclaimed today: *For creation awaits with eager expectation the revelation of the children of God; for creation was made subject to futility, not of its own accord but because of the one who subjected it, in hope that creation itself would be free from slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God* (31).

Look at the liberation that the Christian community awaits --- it is not a liberation that is directed just toward humanity. Here we are not speaking about a liberation in which those who are oppressed today will tomorrow become the oppressors of others, for such a situation

makes *all creation groan in sin* (cf. Romans 8:22). This occurs very frequently when certain liberation movements of this world are only concerned about obtaining power and once they have achieved this, they become more abusive toward those people whom they said they were going to redeem and liberate. On the other hand, the liberation that Christ offers us and that Saint Paul describes in cosmic terminology is a liberation from selfishness and pride and envy and arrogance. Creation is good; wealth is good; large estates are good; land is good. The Bible tells us: *God looked at everything he had made, and he found it very good* (32). Who, then, has subjected creation to evil? Through their sin men and women have brought about this situation. People want to appropriate to themselves the happiness of others. This situation occurs when selfish people want everything for themselves and leave nothing for others. As a result, those people who live on the margins of society become violent and hateful and thus subject their own bodies and lives to sin --- this is the situation that is now groaning. How beautiful to compare this present groaning to the pains of child birth (33). When the time for child birth has arrived, the mother is in pain but also has a sure and certain hope of bringing a new being into the world. Nature and humanity are now groaning. We, in El Salvador, are suffering the pains of child birth! We are in great pain! We are pained, my brothers and sisters, because we see brother fighting against brother and sister against sister, *campesino* again *campesino*, one citizen against another citizen. The time has come for a new world to be born and indeed as Saint Paul says, this redemption will be brought about to the degree that we embrace this seed of the gospel. Thus we see how Jesus compares the different soils on which the seed falls.

It is said that this reflection was not made by Jesus but by the primitive Christian community. The first Christians began to experience what we ourselves experience now, namely, not everyone receives Jesus' word with the same enthusiasm. Yes, some receive the word with enthusiasm but then come the times of persecution and these same people become cowards and flee. Then there are other people who want to accept this word but also want this word to take root in their heart while at the same time their love for wealth is also rooted in their heart. These people believe they can adore God and money. Thus we see that this parable refers to different types of soil (34). Some seed falls on rocky ground, some on the path, and still other seed falls among the thorns.

My sisters and brothers, what a beautiful examination of conscience for each one of us! What kind of heart do I have? What kind of Christian am I? Am I good soil or inconsistent soil? Am I a coward and do I prefer the advantages that this world offers me? Some people say: *let the thorns and the pleasures of this world continue to grow. I do not want to put aside these things, but I do want to be a Christian. I go to Mass but I want to hear the priest speak words that are pleasing to me. Please don't touch the open wounds. Now I cannot go to Mass anywhere because whatever Church I enter, I become disturbed.* Yes, this will happen for these are the people who want the Word of God to take root in their heart and yet want to continue with their selfishness and vices. This cannot be. It is impossible to serve two masters (35). And the authentic Church must preach the true and only Lord, the true and only Word, the only Word that saves and produces fruit, the Word that Jesus sowed --- not the word that the Evil One or human convenience would like to see sown.

Therefore, my sisters and brothers, I conclude by referring to the person who made the Word of God most fruitful. How could we not remember the Virgin on the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, especially when today all people look at her with hope and yet realize that they will not find an easy salvation? Just as Mary spoke to the servants at the wedding feast of Cana and said: *Do whatever he tells you* (36), so now today, Mary speaks these same

words to us. No one can be saved unless they obey the Word of God. When a woman from the crowd told Jesus that his mother was waiting outside to speak with him, he responded by saying that any woman and any person who listens to the Word of God is his mother and brother (37). This is what makes Mary a great woman. Her holiness and her fruitfulness are rooted in the Word of God. When Jesus is lost in the Temple and then found by his parents, a beautiful phrase is then written about Mary --- a phrase that should be the motto for all Christians --- *His mother kept all these things in her heart* (38). The same occurred when the shepherds came to Bethlehem to adore the child Jesus: *Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart* (39). In other words, when Mary heard the Word of God, she reflected upon this Word in her heart. The holiness of every Christian resides in the fact that the Word of God falls upon fertile ground. My sisters and brothers, I hope that as I attempt to sow the Word this morning --- I hope that I am not simply the sower, but also the fertile ground for this Word to take root.

Let us help one another, my sisters and brothers, so that we become this Church community where the Word of God produces fruit, not thirty or sixty fold, but a hundred fold (40). Let us now stand and profess our faith.

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<sup>1</sup> Comunicado de los jesuitas de El Salvador, *La Prensa Gráfica*, 12 July 1978.

<sup>2</sup> The National Democratic Union (UDN) demanded respect for the rights of political prisoners. See *La Prensa Gráfica*, 12 July 1978.

<sup>3</sup> Minimum salary in colones. See *La Prensa Gráfica*, 15 July 1978.

*Marginal References* (1) Mt 23,3: (2) Is 55,10: (3) Gn 1,3: (4) Mt 1,23: (5) Mt 6,9: (6) Am 1,3: (7) Mk 1,15: (8) Jn 1,14: (9) Mt 13,1-2: (10) Ac 2,6: (11) 2Cor 1,20: (12) Jn 8,12: (13) Jn 14,6: (14) Mk 16,15-16: (15) Jn 20,22: (16) Ac 2,3-4: (17) Lk 4,18: (18) Mt 13,4,19: (19) Mt 13,8,23: (20) GS 4: (21) EN 17: (22) EN 18: (23) EN 21: (24) EN 22: (25) EN 30: (26) EN 23: (27) EN 47: (28) EN 24: (29) Mt 13,3: (30) Rm 8,18: (31) Rm 8,19-21: (32) Gn 1,31: (33) Rm 8,22: (34) Mt 18,18-22: (35) Mt 6,24: (36) Jn 2,5: (37) Lk 11,27: (38) Lk 2,51: (39) Lk 2,19: (40) Mt 13,23.