

# THE SPIRIT OF GOD AMONG PEOPLE

**Sixteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time**  
**July 23, 2017**

**Readings:**

*Wisdom 12:13, 16-19*

*Romans 8:26-27*

*Matthew 13:24-34*

Only a divine teacher, like Jesus Christ, could draw attention to his very simple yet very accurate parables. This can be said not only about those who gathered around Jesus twenty centuries ago but can also be said about the multitudes of people who for centuries have gathered together every Sunday and continue to learn about this divine doctrine, these marvels of our faith through anecdotes and comparisons. This is the way in which the rabbis of Jesus' time communicated with people. I am happy and feel that it is a great honor to be a humble messenger of Jesus' doctrine. I am grateful to all of you who listen to me and are attentive to this preaching.

I invite you, my sisters and brothers, to lift up your hearts and minds and unite yourselves to this multitude of people who not only gathered around the lake to listen to Jesus preach from the boat, but also to unite yourselves with so many other people who find themselves in diverse human situations and who are gathered together in this holy Church of God: the Church of Jesus Christ. Each Sunday let us try to live the intensity of this mystery that gathers us together around the altar. When we conclude our reflection together let us go forth from this Cathedral or from those communities where people have come together to listen to this proclamation of the Word on their radios --- let us go forth renewed in faith and encouraged with hope. Let us shine forth in the midst of the world with an unfailing joy and enthusiasm because we are being nourished not merely by human words but by the words of the Son of God. Indeed, we are not only nourished by words but are also nourished by the Eucharist --- the Word and the Eucharist form part of our Sunday celebration. The celebration of the Word of God, under the signs of bread and wine, becomes nourishment for our life. As a people of faith we believe in the presence of Christ who said that he would be with us until the end of time (1).

In today's beautiful readings I discover the title of this morning's homily: *The Spirit of God among people*. As usual I will divide my homily into three sections: first, the Spirit of God; second, the vocation of women and men; third, the Church as a sign of the Spirit of God among people. In light of these thoughts that are based on the Word of God, we are going to enlighten the reality of our history and the events of the past week.

## **The Spirit of God**

But first of all let us lift up our faith to our God on high so that we can listen to the Spirit of God who speaks to us in the first reading.

The Book of Wisdom is possibly the last book that was written in the Old Testament. It is the product of an Israelite (a contemporary of Jesus) who lived in Alexandria. As he reflected on the Bible he saw the danger of secularization, and the fact that the Word of God could lose its power and become a mere human wisdom. It seems as though the faith of Israel was in grave danger --- people became involved in idolatry and adored false gods. The fervor of the people during the time of the prophets had declined and there was no longer any cult in the Temple of Jerusalem. The people found themselves in an atmosphere of human, Greek, wisdom --- perhaps it is better to say they found themselves in the midst of a cosmopolitan wisdom. And here we find this man who wrote the Book of Wisdom --- the model of one who composes a homily. Indeed, the Book of Wisdom is a homiletic book --- at least the second part of the book is that narrates the history of Israel during the time of the Exodus event. The author of the book of Wisdom, however, narrates this history not as some events that occurred in the past but as events that are taking place now in the city of Alexandria. This is what makes the book a homily, for it applies the Bible to the actual present situation of the people; it incarnates the eternal word of God in the contemporary history of the people. Thus the Book of Wisdom presents us with a model homily.

In the Book of Wisdom we find a reflection on the power of God who, after seven plagues, released the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt. After the people crossed the desert they arrived at the Promised Land. Here the author applies to this present situation the lessons learned in Egypt. The time of Christ is near and the people of Israel are exhorted to maintain their faith in the true God. One of the homiletic reflections on the God who saved Israel is the passage that was proclaimed this morning. In this passage we discover the God of the Bible, the God who called Moses to lead the people to freedom, the God who inspired the Patriarchs with the hope of redemption, the same God who centuries later is adored by the Israelites in a non-believing city. We could also say that this is the same God that we worship today in 1978 in this land of El Salvador, the God who has not changed, the eternal God. Look at the wonderful way in which the Sacred Scriptures present this God. Look at this and reflect on this, for these are not my poor words but rather the words of the homily of the Book of Wisdom. Let us learn about the God of our faith!

In the first place, the Book of Wisdom states that God is the only God (2). The whole Bible cries out with power these words of unity and unison. This cry is proclaimed today as the final echo of the Old Testament and it is proclaimed with all the power of revelation. There is only one God and all those who create other gods sin and offend God --- they are idolaters. Here the homily of 1978 would change a little from the homily of the Book of Wisdom. We do not face the danger of an idolatry like that which occurred during the flourishing times of Alexandria, but nevertheless the God of El Salvador is threatened by the false idols of money and power and luxury and pleasure. So many idols threaten our civilization for we act in the same way as the Israelites in Alexandria who allowed their hearts to be turned away from the one God. You shall not worship another God and you shall not serve another God because your God is the one true God (3). The Book of Wisdom reveals to us today that our God has universal sovereignty and total power (4). Our God can do what he wills, for he is all-powerful, sovereign (5) --- we have heard all of this proclaimed about the God of revelation.

In the first reading we also hear God referred to as a God who is Provident, a God who cares for all, a God who governs us (6). How beautiful to know that we are governed by God and that we are under God's sovereignty! That is what the Holy Bible means when it says there is no jurisdiction that does not come from God (7) and therefore authority must be

obeyed because it comes from God. But the Bible also tells us that the sovereign, the one who commands, may not command anything except what God wills and that if an authority must be respected, it is because it reflects God's sacred dominion. When human authority becomes abusive of God's law, of right, of liberty, of human dignity, then it is time to cry out like Saint Paine who declared: *we must obey God rather than men* (8). All authority comes from God and therefore a ruler may not use it capriciously but only according to the Lord's will. God's providence wants to govern people, and rulers are his ministers, servants of God, like all his creatures.

Then the reading goes on to say that God is just (9). God does not judge unjustly and his power is the principle of justice (10). Look at the richness of this concept of justice! Justice is a manifestation of power and power is not true power unless it is also just. The same God who can do what he wills, is not abusive because he cannot be abusive --- he is just and justice *par excellence*. The power of God is illuminated by his infinite justice. He judges with moderation (11)--- this is the eternal serenity of God who is not impatient but who governs all people and all nations. For this reason God's justice is moderate, serene and holy.

Today's readings present us with another characteristic of God: a merciful God. God's sovereignty over all allows him to pardon all people (12). He governs us all with great indulgence because he can do all that he wants to do (13). It would seem to be the other way around. Because God can do whatever he wants to do, it would seem that God would trample us, would walk over us, would torture us and treat us cruelly. But no! Because God can do what he wants to do, he loves us. Because he has the resources to be merciful and to hope that people will return to the right way --- he loves us.

How different from the justice of human beings! When humans acquire power, how they trample others! What torture! What horrors! *You can do whatever you want, and so you are treating me this way*. How many must have spoken in this way in those horrid dungeons that shame our civilization: those of the police and the National Guard, wherever there has been torture --- by the powerful, by those who have weapons, by those who wear boots to kick with, because they can do whatever they want. But only God can do whatever he wants, and this God governs us with kindness. In a weak person, power becomes cruelty --- a sense of inferiority is carried to the level of brutishness. God has no sense of inferiority. God is sovereign. God can do all, and so he judges even his felons, even his sinners, with kindness and mercy. But this just and merciful God also sanctions, because his mercy is not weakness. In today's reading God reveals his power to those who did not believe in his total power (14). He put down the arrogance of those who did not recognize him. Yes, when the insolent turn away from God --- oh how miserable they become! In that situation the power of God will make the proud and the arrogant and those who disobey his Laws --- God will make them feel the powerful strength of his punishment. God also sanctions but only when he has lost all patience. God is just but also infinitely merciful.

My dear sisters and brothers, this is our God. Let us not forget God and let us respect our God and realize that all our joy and the confidence of our faith is derived from God. Hopefully this God who came to us in the person of Jesus Christ and who in turn revealed God as a Father, as Provident, as goodness ... hopefully this God will remove all fear from our hearts so that we can serve our God with love.

You know that there are two kinds of fear, servile fear and filial fear. Servile fear or the fear of servants is the fear of those who fear punishment, the fear of those who do things in

order to avoid punishment --- it is a wretched, horrible fear which puts on appearances. Filial fear is that of children who fear offending their parents. It is a fear that is born out of love. It is the love of a daughter who does not want to resent her mother, or the love of those who do not want to resent anyone and want to do good. This is the love that we should have for God. Our God is a God of love, goodness, mercy and because of this we serve God --- not because we fear punishment, but simply because we love God. As written in this beautiful poem<sup>1</sup>:

You move me to your love in such a way  
That—even if there were no heaven—I would love you;  
And—even if there were no hell—I would fear you.

You do not have to give to gain my love;  
For—even if what I hope for becomes hopeless—  
In the same way I love you, I would love you still.

How beautiful are the hearts of those people who possess this kind of independence and love, serve and obey God not because of fear and not because one action or another action is sinful, but act because they love God. The fact that an action might be sinful remains as a type of brake on our actions. The fear of hell is a type of reserve, perhaps necessary, but should not be the primary motive for our actions. The primary motive for our actions revolves around our relationship with God --- thus we should be motivated by love and gratitude.

### **The vocation of mankind**

Let us move on to my second idea. This is the plan of the God who wishes to come and live in the midst of humanity. God has created men and women and my second thought is the following: what is the vocation of men and women? I will try to summarize these ideas. The vocation of each person is to be an image of God and to participate in the life and glory of God --- in other words, people are called to collaborate with the plan of salvation.

In the first place I tell you that the vocation of each person is to be the image of God --- the vocation of goodness and here I am going to use the beautiful parable of the wheat and the weeds. But first let us listen to the way in which the first reading was concluded: *And you gave your sons good ground for hope that you would permit repentance for their sins* (15).

When the disciples asked Jesus to explain the parable of the wheat and the weeds (16), Jesus said clearly: *the kingdom of heaven may be likened to a man who sowed good seed in his field* (17). Thus the good seed represents the citizens of the Kingdom while the bad seed represents the followers of the evil one. This does not mean that God intended that there were be good and evil people in the world. When the slaves of the householder asked: *Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where have the weeds come from?* (18), the Lord answered, *an enemy has done this*. My sisters and brothers, I find a most beautiful commentary on this gospel passage in the documents of Vatican II (19). The Council states: *faith throws a new light on everything, manifests God's design over man's total vocation, and thus directs the mind to solutions which are fully human*. Here the Council speaks about those values that the world holds in high esteem. For example, among ourselves we highly esteem the values of respect, freedom, dignity, authority, community, etc. Every person carries these values in their hearts. The Council has stated that these values that proceed from our God-

given intelligence possess an extraordinary goodness, but because of the corruption of the human heart they are wrenched from their proper destination and therefore need to be purified (20).

This is the commentary on the wheat and the weeds. God has sown goodness. No child is born evil. We have all been called to holiness. The values that God has planted in the hearts of humanity and that our contemporaries hold in high esteem are not rare stones but realities that are continually born anew in our midst. Why then is there so much evil? Because these values have been corrupted by the evil inclinations of the human heart and therefore they need to be purified. The primary and original vocation of humanity is one of goodness. We have all been born for goodness. No one is born with the inclination to participate in abductions. No one is born with an inclination to be a criminal. No one is born to torture. No one is born to be an assassin. We are all born to be good, to love and to understand. *Why then, Lord, have so many weeds taken root in your field?* Jesus says: *an enemy has done this* (21). Humanity has allowed the weeds, the bad company, the bad intentions and the vices to take root in their hearts.

My beloved young men and women, you are at a time in your life when you must decide your vocation. Reflect on the fact that we have all been called to goodness. Yet the older generation of this present age --- and I am part of that group of people --- have left you an inheritance of great selfishness and evil. You must renew these realities; you must be new wheat, a new harvest, fields that have been renewed by the hand of God. Build a better world, children and young people.

Respond to the call of our second vocation: the call to conversion. Look at what the first reading has told us, namely, that God waits for the conversion of men and women (22). In the parable of the wheat and the weeds (23), Jesus, God who dwells with us, announces that the wheat should not be pulled up but rather we must wait for the harvest time. Thus the oldest person among us can change, can be converted. The good thief who was crucified with Jesus on Calvary converted and at the last hour received forgiveness and heaven (24). It is never too late to change. With the vocation that God has given me I want to call all sinners here to change their evil ways. My sisters and brothers, how many times in this Cathedral and in the difficult circumstances of our preaching, how many times have we concluded our denunciations with the call to conversion? We have never denounced situations with resentment; we have never planted hatred.

Yesterday, in the community of Tutunichapa where I celebrated Mass, a school girl asked me: *I have been given a question and you can help me respond.* I asked: *what is your question?* She took out her notebook and said: *Is it true that you plant hatred?* I asked: *Who told you this?* She said: *this is the work that we were given in school ... to discover whether the Bishop plants hatred.* How sad my sisters and brothers, even in the form of a question we can see so many weeds. I would hope that everyone would be able to respond to the young girl with the words that I spoke: *have you listened to me speak?* I asked. *No,* she said. *Those who have listened to me could tell you that I have never planted hatred. So why do people say this? People say this because they do not want to understand the message of love. The love of Jesus demands renunciation. The love of Jesus at times demands things that disturb us and therefore it is easier to say that subversive people are at fault here; it is easier to say that I plant hatred. Yet I am doing nothing more than preaching change and conversion. Whenever we denounce injustice we conclude by asking that those who have acted in this evil way might repent and be converted. God does not want to lose anyone and God awaits all of us.*

In these mysterious dens where so many of our brothers and sisters have been lost, how many people know the secrets of these places, how many people have their hands stained with blood and abuse, how many weeds! Yet God awaits these people. Jesus says: *do not pull up the weeds! Wait!* (25). As a friend I want to tell all our sisters and brothers whose conscience is uneasy because they have offended God and their neighbor --- you cannot be happy the way you are. The God of love is calling you. The God of love wants to pardon you and save you.

The parable of the wheat and the weeds should lead us, sisters and brothers, to understand the mystery of iniquity --- a mystery that is also operative in the Church. The Church is not just the wheat crop. Bishops, priests, sisters, lay people, families, youth, Catholic School --- should they not all be holy? Indeed, they should. Are they? Sadly, we must say no. Then the Church is false. This is not true either. If a Church wants to pride itself on having only holy members, it will not be the true Church, for Christ has said that his Church is like a field where wheat and weeds bear fruit. While we live as part of this Pilgrim Church, we have to live together, wheat and weeds. This does not mean that we all become weeds but rather that the weeds have an opportunity to become wheat so that when the hour arrives we can all be citizens of the Kingdom of God and we are able to shine like the sun in the Kingdom of the Father (26). Even though we go to Church and celebrate Mass, yet if we are not good Christians, then we are only wheat. As long as we resist becoming what we ought to be, we do not possess the ideals of God, but God is waiting ... waiting.

This is the authentic voice of the Gospel. The gospel is not telling us that one person is better than another but rather is calling all of us to conversion. Conversion then is being just and we see this idea repeated in the book of Revelation when we are told that not only must sinners repent of their evil in order to become holy but also speaks these demanding words: *The righteous must still do right, and the holy still be holy* (27). Who knows what is the degree of holiness that God will ask of me and of each one of you? If we have not achieved that holiness then we have to be purified before entering that Kingdom where we will live as children of God.

It is time, my sisters and brothers, that we take advantage of our life and not simply do what we want to do. The Bible speaks about God and tells us that we have the power to do everything (28). Yet because we have this power this does not mean that we are created to do evil. Even though God is free, God cannot do evil because he is goodness and true freedom consists of doing good. We do good not because we are forced to act in this way but because, like God, we are free. Men and women who are created in the image of God have been given the ability to do evil, but this does not mean that we should act in this way. We have hands to strike another person, and so we can strike another but we should not act in this way. Our hands should be used to love another. We have feet and we are able to walk along paths of righteousness or we can decide to walk on evil paths. But we should not use our feet to walk on these evil paths nor to kick or torture another. Rather we should use our feet to walk freely on the path of righteousness. God uses his freedom for infinite goodness and so his children, created in the image of God, should use their freedom to do good and not to commit sin or live in sin that offends God. We should not abuse this freedom.

My dear sisters and brothers, we are called to be citizens of the Kingdom. Indeed, our vocation is to participate in the life and the glory of God. Here I refer to today's second reading. Saint Paul, as you have seen because we have been reflecting on his letter to the Romans for the past few weeks, presents us with a great revelation and hopefully we will not forget what we have heard. Saint Paul tells us that in this life Christians are justified and

forgiven (29) when they truly live their baptismal commitment. This Christian life that has made us children of God, new people, will be revealed to us and glorify our bodies with the glorification that we await (30). The body that bears within it the seal of the Spirit of new life will also be raised up (31). Jesus has told us today that our bodies will be radiant and our spirits bright as the sun in the kingdom of the Father (32). Yesterday in Tutunichapa and in so many other marginal areas I visited poor ranches yet these people are very holy people who live beside people who are involved in all kinds of vices. What can I say? At the side of a holy person is a sinner. At the hour of judgment what a great difference will occur ... but now, no. Now the great sinner can appear to shine forth while the holy person is often despised. But when the true values that are important to the eyes of God shine forth, then, Saint Paul tells us that the Spirit will testify that we are children of God (33). Today's second reading also speaks about another function of the Spirit: the Spirit teaches us to pray.

If we really want to reveal the new creation that God has made within us, giving us his Spirit and making us sharers of his divine pleasure, then let us be led by his Spirit to pray. Saint Paul tells us today: *The Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit itself intercedes with inexpressible groanings. And the one who searches hearts knows what is the intention of the Spirit* (34). How wonderful that God should start an intimate dialogue with human beings by raising them to God's level and speaking their own language! And to raise them to God's level, he has given them his Spirit. To pray is to converse with God.

The Second Vatican Council uses a very helpful comparison (35) saying that God has given humans the intimate sanctuary of their consciousness so that they can enter that private space and there speak alone with God to decide their own destiny. We all have a Church within ourselves, our own consciousness. There God is. There is God's Spirit. Blessed are those who do not forsake that shrine by failing to pray. Blessed are those who enter often to speak alone with their God. Try it yourselves, brothers and sisters. Though you feel yourselves sinners, tainted, enter all the more and say: *Lord, correct me. I have sinned. I have offended you.* Or when you feel the joy of a good act: *Lord, I give you thanks because my conscience is joyful and you commend me.* Or when in affliction you find no one to offer a word of guidance, enter your intimate sanctuary and God will show you the way. Or when you are sad, like those many mothers of persons arrested and not seen again, enter alone with God and say: *Lord, you know where they are. You know how they are being treated.* Speak with him. How beautiful is prayer, my friends, when it is truly made with God's Spirit inside us and sharing in God's life!

In the book of Wisdom there is the beautiful prayer of the ruler who asks to share in God's wisdom. All of us can pray in the same way: *God of my fathers, Lord of mercy, you who have made all things by your word and in your wisdom have established man to rule the creatures produced by you, to govern the world in holiness and justice and to render judgment in integrity of heart: give me Wisdom, the attendant at your throne, and reject me not from among your children* (36). Later he says: *Send me Wisdom from your holy heavens and from your glorious throne dispatch her that she may be with me and work with me, that I may know what is your pleasure, for she knows and understands all things, and will guide me discreetly in my affairs and safeguard me by her glory; thus my deeds will be acceptable and I shall judge your people justly* (37).

When I read this prayer, my sisters and brothers, I remembered the prayer that the members of Alcoholics Anonymous pray --- a prayer that seems to me to be a beautiful summary of the prayer in the book of Wisdom: *God, grant me the serenity to accept the*

*things I cannot change; the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference*<sup>2</sup>.

I believe that this prayer is not only important in the saving halls of Alcoholics Anonymous but should be the prayer of all those people who want to change the world. How much good this prayer has done for the alcoholic! Alcoholics are aware of the fact that they can change things in this life and I have heard so many testimonies and I can tell you that there is great joy when one becomes possessed by the wisdom of God. The worst alcoholic is able to change his/her life. Then the person is no longer an alcoholic but becomes a joy to the whole family. Looking at this reality, why can't we as sinners do the same thing? The selfish person who appears incapable of sharing life with another person ... all those people who believe that nothing can change and that things have to continue as they are.

It is necessary that changes occur. But here I am not speaking about changes without wisdom. *Give me the wisdom to know the difference*. How could it be possible that people who have been called to participate in the life, thoughts, and intelligence of God would be unable to create a better world? The people of El Salvador lament the fact that they seem to be walking on a dead end street --- why not pray? Pray and do everything possible to change the things that we can and ask God for the courage to change these things and the serenity to accept the things that we cannot change at the present time (38).

I also want to tell you, my sisters and brothers, that our vocation is a vocation to eternal life. We will shine like the sun in the Kingdom of the Father. Let us not forget this eschatological dimension of our lives, this dimension of life beyond the grave. We will never find total salvation on this side of the grave. A better world has to be illuminated by the realities beyond the grave, realities that can never occur on this side of the grave. Here things will always be imperfect but the hearts of Christians have to struggle to make these realities less imperfect so that they become the road that leads to the infinite perfection of the Absolute God who awaits us.

I would also say that our vocation is one of collaboration. We are called to collaborate in the salvation of others and it is here that today's parable has great importance: *the Kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed with three measures of wheat until the whole batch was leavened* (39). According to Jesus this is the life of every Christian: to be leavened. Bakers know the effect of the little bit of yeast that is mixed into the mass of dough so that later the entire mass becomes leavened. This is what the Christian should be, a little bit of yeast that then transforms the family, the neighborhood, the community, the town, the whole nation and the whole world. We are a yeast without strength and that is why we have not been able to leaven the entire mass. This reflection should lead us to understand the responsibilities of our Christian vocation to be apostles and to be that leaven in our society.

### **The Church, sign of God's Spirit in the midst of humanity**

Finally, my sisters and brothers, I want to present my third idea: the Church as a sign of the Spirit of God in the midst of humanity. Here I refer to the third parable that Jesus spoke to us: *the kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a person took and sowed in a field ... it becomes a large bush and the birds of the sky come and dwell in its branches* (40). This is an image of the Church as a sign in the world. Just as the tree is a sign of protection for the birds who fly and seek some shade, so too the Church is a sign for people who can discover in the Church the fullness of all those means that God has given to her.



I said before that we cannot wait for everyone to share in the life of God or the holiness that people should possess. But as the great Italian writer, Manzoni wrote<sup>3</sup>: *When I kneel before a confessor, it is not necessary to know if this person has a greater need for God's pardon than I do. What is important to me is the sign of forgiveness.* I absolve you from your sins even though it is a sinner who absolves you yet the absolution is given in the name of the God who pardons and desires the conversion of all people. This is the meaning of a sign. For example, this Cathedral where you are now gathered is a sign for those who seek the Word and the Lord's Eucharist. It is a sign that reveals that meaning of the Church.

My dear sisters and brothers, we are like that mustard seed that grows and becomes this powerful sign. We are true instruments and signs that point the way to salvation. May every person in the Church and every citizen of the Kingdom be an invitation in the midst of the world --- may we be the wheat that invites the weed to change so that together we can become a full harvest for the Kingdom of God.

### **Life of the Church**

Now, my sisters and brothers, we can understand how the Church is this sign (and forgive me for leaving this until the end) ... we can understand how the Church must be this leaven, how the Church is this wheat that is in the midst of weeds. This Church offers us many signs of her presence and many signs of rejection by the weeds that surround her.

With joy we have seen that the Pope has selected the theme for the next celebration of the Day of Peace which will occur on January 1<sup>st</sup>: *To Reach Peace, Teach Peace*<sup>4</sup>. The education in peace does not end when we finish our classes in school but continues into our old age. We can always learn how to be instruments of peace. No one should feel that they are outside of this school of peace but rather we should all try to educate ourselves in this matter of peace.

Rome has also published a document to guide the relations between the bishop and the religious in the Church<sup>5</sup>. We will have the opportunity to know these two great elements of the Church: the episcopacy and religious life --- these two elements have to work together for the good of the People of God.

There is much gratifying news about the preparations for the meeting in Puebla. Bishops and experts have been meeting in Bogotá to prepare the basic study document. We ask that you continue to pray so that all of this work will lead to the realization of the true hopes of our Latin America. The president of CELAM, the Brazilian Cardinal Lorscheider, has said that in the meeting at Puebla there will be some very profound revisions of the Christological doctrine as well as revisions in liberation theology. The Church will have to study in a more profound way her commitment to the poor and her attitude toward the positions of governments and other organizations that have made the process of evangelization more difficult in Latin America. The bishops have also pointed out some of the difficulties that evangelization encounters in the large cities where the need for smaller communities becomes most necessary. Let us listen to their words so that we can continue to work in this area of small ecclesial communities --- this is precisely where the process of evangelization is able to become more familiar and more human.

By way of anticipation we want to congratulate the sister churches of Santiago de María and Santa Ana --- they will celebrate their patronal feast on July 25<sup>th</sup>, the feast of Saint James the Apostle, and July 26<sup>th</sup>, the feast of Saint Ann.

Here in the Archdiocese, our newspaper, *Orientación*, published a document<sup>6</sup> that expresses the solidarity of our priests with the Jesuits whose house was searched on July 8<sup>th</sup>. They share the outrage and offer and their moral support and believe that this is the right moment to publish this document in which they affirm the Church's position and the position of the people of El Salvador. We rejoice that once again the untruthfulness of the calumnies of those who want to cause harm to the Church have been proven.

From July 28-31, the Colegio Auxiliadora under the direction of the Salesian Sisters will celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their foundation. Very soon the Colegio Don Bosco that is under the direction of the Salesian Order will also celebrate their jubilee. We rejoice and we ask that the Lord will continue to bless the followers of Don Bosco.

The Centro Ana Guerra de Jesús for women who work in the market has held a meeting and discussed the theme of the life of the child in the Salvadorian family. This is a very quiet ministry that is achieving much good among those persons who work in the market.

From the 24<sup>th</sup> to the 28<sup>th</sup> of this month the Universidad Centroamericana will hold a seminar on the Sociology of Religion.

During these days the communities of Zacamil, San Antonio Abad, Santiago Texacuangos and Mejicanos have organized a gathering for engaged couples. At least twenty-five couples are going to reflect on marriage according to God's plan.

Yesterday, as I have already told you, I had the opportunity to visit one of the distant villages, Tetunichapa, where I celebrated Mass and was able to observe the pastoral ministry of the catechists and the apostolic Christian communities. I invite all Christians to work in this same way.

This afternoon, as we did last week in the parish of Miramonte, we will have a similar celebration of *Corpus Christi* in the parish of San Antonio.

My sisters and brothers, I want to invite you this afternoon at 6:30pm to come to Paleca where as you already know the Blessed Sacrament was stolen. We are going to celebrate a Mass to make amends for this sacrilege against the Blessed Sacrament. I also ask everyone to help the pastor replace the lost ciborium.

I also rejoice at the return of Father Guillermo Alfonso Rodríguez, one of the priests who had to leave the country during some very difficult moments because he feared for his life. We want to thank the Immigration authorities who have allowed Father to return without any further problems. Hopefully this is a sign that other priests who were unjustly removed from the Archdiocese will be able to return without any further fears.

We also rejoice with Father Fernando Echeverría and the pastor of Concepción in Chalatenango --- during these day they have celebrated the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their priesthood ordination and we ask you to pray for them.

With regard to the ministry of the religious we want to rejoice and greet the Sisters who direct the Escuela Catarina Di Maggio for their triumph in an oratory contest ... the student Ana María Chafoya Solano represented the school. We also send our greetings to the

Carmelite Missionaries of the Policlínica and La Laguna for their great labor there. I ask you to pardon me for not mentioning you last Sunday.

I also want to invite all of you, my sisters and brothers, to participate in the priestly ordination that I will have the pleasure of celebrating. Father Carlos Arias Monge, S.J. will be ordained next Saturday in the Capilla del Externado San Jose on July 29<sup>th</sup> at 5:00pm.

As we have already announced I want to remind you about the celebration of the feast of the Divine Saviour --- we will celebrate the Vigil Mass at 5:00pm and then the following morning at 8:00am. It is possible that we will have to celebrate this Mass outdoors.

Helping the cathedral is one of your obligations. I want to read to you the testimony of a person who wrote on their envelope the following: *The tithe of June for my service to Our God. This is my tithe.* This person put in the envelope a sum of money that was the equivalent of 10% of his/her salary as an offering to our Lord.

### **Events of the week**

My sisters and brothers, this is the Church and these are some of the signs of our Church in the world. At the same time this Church has to live with many weeds and thus it is here that the Church rejects all those things that do not conform to God's plan. For example, the searches have continued. Everyone knows from the newspaper accounts<sup>7</sup> of the capture of a little girl, twelve years old and another minor child who was taken prisoner with her mother. I have also heard that the humble dwelling of Mrs. Dolores Castillo was searched. This woman is elderly, a diabetic and suffers from hypertension and arthritis. She had no fear of the 60 agents who searched her house but has been tormented by the surprise of all of these actions. As we heard in this morning's readings, we all need to be conscious of being more human.

The labor union of Cigarrería Morazán was dissolved and there is fear that others will also be dissolved. This has occurred because of a lack of support for the workers to organize themselves. About 75% of the workers are not organized in unions and therefore are unable to make use of their right to defend themselves as a union.

I also want to unite myself to the suffering of the family of Doctor Alvaro Edgar Cuéllar, excuse me, Victor Cuéllar Ortiz whose son, Alvaro Edgar, was abducted. Many prayers have been offered and from this pulpit, as is my custom, I call upon everyone to pray that calmness and tranquility be restored to this family. I want to remind the abductors that this family is poor and unable to offer the large sums of money that are often demanded in these cases.

There have also been violations and injustices in constitutional procedures, for example, the case of Dr. Eduardo Espinoza Fiallos, who thanks to God now after one month of deception has been restored to his family. Other hostages have been brought before the courts with evident signs of torture, as was the case of one person who was attended by a nurse because his thumbs had been smashed.

I want to thank *La Crónica del Pueblo*<sup>8</sup> for having echoed these denunciations and I ask you to support this newspaper that finds itself in a difficult situation and which naturally, because of their ideals, cannot count on much support.

I also want to tell you that on July 18<sup>th</sup> the Agreement on Human Rights of the Organization of American States went into effect and was signed by El Salvador. In Peru, the military government has granted an amnesty and a general indult for all those who were sentenced and brought before the courts for political reasons. The government also suppressed a decree that allowed people to be detained and imprisoned without any judicial hearing. Italy also decreed an amnesty that will benefit over nine thousand prisoners. These are examples for our country. Dr. Fox, the representative of the International Commission of Jurists and a person with whom we have had lengthy conversations, will visit us.

We could speak about many other people and other news here but above all else we are now going to celebrate our Eucharist. We bring to the altar all these events and you can unite the intentions of your family and your own personal intentions to all these events of the past week. In this way these events become an offering to the Lord --- for all the events of our history have been illuminated with the Word of God and they now become the matter of the sacrifice in which Christ, our Lord makes his love and redemption present among us. Lord, may all this suffering and pain and shame, may this word that we have reflected on, may all of these intentions that we place on the altar be changed into hope so that El Salvador might live better days. So be it.

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<sup>1</sup> Verses from the sonnet to *Cristo crucificado*. Anonymous 16<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>2</sup> Prayer attributed to the protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971).

<sup>3</sup> Alessandro Manzoni (1785-1873).

<sup>4</sup> *Osservatore Romano*, 23 July 1978.

<sup>5</sup> See *Ibid*, 16 July 1978.

<sup>6</sup> See "El senado presbyteral de la Arquidiócesis de San Salvador", *Orientación*, 23 July 1978.

<sup>7</sup> See *La Crónica del Pueblo*, 19 July 1978.

<sup>8</sup> This is the only Salvadoran paper to publish in its Monday edition and account of Mons. Romero's accusations.

*Marginal References* (1) Mt 28,20: (2) Ws 12,13: (3) Dt 6,4: (4) Ws 12,16: (5) Ws 12,18: (6) Ws 12,13: (7) Rm 13,1: (8) Ac 5,29: (9) Ws 12,13: (10) Ws 12,16a: (11) Ws 12,18a: (12) Ws 12,16b: (13) Ws 12,18b: (14) Ws 12,17: (15) Ws 12,19: (16) Mt 13,36: (17) Mt 13,38: (18) Mt 13,27-28: (19) GS 11: (20) GS 11: (21) Mt 13,28: (22) Ws 12,19: (23) Mt 13,29: (24) Lk 23,42-43: (25) Mt 13,29: (26) Mt 13,43: (27) Rv 22,11b: (28) Ws 12,18: (29) Rm 5,9: (30) Rm 6,4: (31) Rm 8,23: (32) Mt 13,43: (33) Rm 8,16: (34) Rm 8,26-27: (35) GS 16: (36) Ws 9,14: (37) Ws 9,10-12: (38) Mt 13,43: (39) Mt 13,33: (40) Mt 13,31-32.