

THE DIVINE SAVIOR AND THE POPE, GOD WITH US

Nineteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time
August 13, 1978

Readings:

1 Kings 19:9a, 11-13

Romans 9:1-5

Matthew 14:22-33

My dear sisters and brothers and radio audience.

In the Word of God that was just proclaimed I find a wonderful echo of the two great events that we have lived during this past week: our August celebrations of the feast of the Divine Savior and the death and burial of Pope Paul VI¹ and now we await news of his successor.

Therefore, above all else, I want to congratulate the Archdiocese and all the faithful who participated in the celebration of the feast of our Divine Patron and for having given, this year, such a beautiful and eloquent witness of solidarity with our Divine Patron. A people whose glance is focused on Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world is a people that will never pass away. We must continue to maintain this sign of hope: our love for our Divine Patron. The traditional *bajada* (descent) on the afternoon of August 5th as well as the Mass that was celebrated outdoors (because the Cathedral does not have the capacity to seat the multitudes that gathered for this celebration) are, by themselves, eloquent signs of a profoundly Christian people. Let us continue to give this honor to our patron and let us also try to deepen this relationship of union that fills us with hope in the Son of God who, as we explained in last Sunday's homily, calls himself the Son of Man.

Today when we close a brief but profound period in the life of the Church, I want to speak about the death of Pope Paul VI and want to express my profound gratitude for the many expressions of condolences that I have had the honor of receiving. This is clearly a family that wants to express their condolences and in their grief wants to share their sorrow with someone and finds in the Pastor of the Diocese someone with whom they can share their pain and hope. I have also been saddened by the death of the Pope who during his life affirmed me many times in my difficult ministry. In his death he also affirms me and this fills me with hope because I know there are many people who place their hope in the Church and her pastors, many people who feel that the Church shares their pain and sorrow. The Church is indeed a family. Blessed be God! Even though the suffering and death of a Pope is painful, nevertheless, the people are filled with hope in the Church. I repeat what I wrote in the book of condolences: "death gives us hope"².

I also admire and am grateful to our media --- press, radio and television --- for they have used these means of communication to inform the people of this great news. How beautiful it is to see that these instruments that God has allowed humankind to invent to be able to communicate with one another socially, to see these instruments used for the good and truth

rather than for intrigue, lies and slander! The means of communication have been sanctified in a wonderful way and they have shown the potential they have for shaping public opinion. How wonderful is public opinion when it vibrates with truth and goodness, when the subject of this display of emotion is the Pontiff who has had a profound impact on a civilization that is truly worthy of human beings. We are grateful to the media that during these days has rightly and justly given honor to the Pope and has had the good sense not to communicate through these channels the slanders that at previous times have been transmitted and that were offensive to the Pope. Hopefully we will no longer read slanderous words or have to listen to those voices that sound like cackle from the caves of our beautiful countryside! Hopefully the media will continue to communicate that which is true and good! Indeed, may our media --- radio, press and television --- be true schools that form our young people.

For this reason, my sisters and brothers, I insist that as long as we do not have guarantees that the media will serve the truth and goodness in a free and courageous manner, then you and I and those who read the newspapers and listen to the radio and view the television --- we must be critical in our use of the media. This week I was happy to listen to the words of a professor who told me: *I used to believe everything that was published in the daily newspapers, but when you said that we must learn how to read the papers and discern the difference between the truth and lies, I began to read the newspaper in a new way.* Thanks be to God! This is precisely what I desire --- that people learn how to discern what the media communicates. Thus people will be able to praise and believe the media when they act on behalf of that which is good. They will also be able to repudiate the media when they serve on beautiful plates unprepared and poisonous dishes.

I would say that the Word of God illuminates in a wonderful way the two events that I have spoken about, even though during the week (a time that we might call a week filled with shadows) there have occurred other national events that also concern us. Nevertheless, the two events that I mentioned are like lights that illuminate this whole past week and provide a framework for our concrete history. Therefore, let us highlight that which distinguishes this People of God, this People of God that is Church. This Church is composed of men and women who have made a commitment of faith because of their enlightenment by Christ and their reception of the sacrament of Baptism. As Christians they raise up in the midst of the world this column of truth that is also called the teaching of the Popes. From this perspective of solidarity with Christ and with his representative on earth we become, day by day, an enlightened people. Even though we share the sad history of a worldly people who are enlightened by so many things that are not as pure as the Kingdom of God, nevertheless, let us learn how to become what Christ has called us to be, namely, salt of the earth and light of the world (1).

Today my homily could be titled: *The Divine Savior and the Pope, signs of God with us.* Let us learn how to exploit these signs so that we might shine in the world with the light of the divine transfigured Lord, shine with the goodness and truth of the visible head of the Church. I will develop my thought with three ideas: first, the desire of God and the ability of humanity to mutually encounter one another, second, signs of God's presence among us, third, the Pope, the great sign of the Church and the great sacrament of the Church.

The desire for God and the capacity of humanity to share this with each other

The first reading describes in a very beautiful form my first thought --- God's desire to be with humanity, to be present with men and women so that they also might experience this

presence. Thus the first reading also presents to us humankind's ability to understand this visit, this presence and indwelling of God in the world.

It is a scene that brings us back to August 6th. Elijah, one of the persons who appeared with Jesus (2), is fleeing from persecution because he had defended the rights of God. He has made a difficult journey of forty days across the desert and arrived at Mount Horeb. Mount Horeb is the same as Mount Sinai where centuries before, Moses, the other historical figure of the transfiguration, spoke with God and received the commandments from God (3). Those who have seen the wonderful film *The Ten Commandments* will remember that sublime scene of Moses receiving from God the legislation that would guide the People of God. We can see then that God desired to make Mount Horeb or Mount Sinai a sign of his coming into the world, a sign of his presence among us and Moses and Elijah are the two eminent persons of this presence of God on Sinai and the two protagonists of the Old Testament who appeared with the divine transfigured Jesus on August 6th, the day of our national feast.

What happened to Moses centuries ago occurs once again to Elijah. God told Moses that he should prepare himself because he was about to see the passing of God before him. Moses covered his face (4) because, as the Bible says, no one can see God and continue to live (5). The passing of God is a sign of God's transcendence and infinite majesty. After God has passed in front of Moses, he was able to see God from behind (6). My sisters and brothers, this is the way in which we all see God for no one can behold God directly just as no one can look directly into the sun. Indeed if we do look directly into the sun we can suffer severe consequences. There is too much of a distance between God and ourselves to be able to see God directly --- the pupils of our eyes are too limited. But yes we are able to see God from behind, his passing. Thus this morning we encounter Elijah who is told: *Go outside and stand on the mountainside before the Lord; the Lord will be passing by* (7). First a strong wind passed and this wind crushed the rocks. Then Elijah felt the tremors of a strong earthquake and saw the flames of a great fire. But, the Bible tells us, God was not in the wind or the earthquake or the fire (8). After all of this Elijah heard a soft, whispering sound -- something insignificant --- and there was the Lord!

It seems that the Second Vatican Council is referring to this passage when it speaks about the two forms of God's revelation to humanity. God has revealed himself in a natural way: through creation and the preservation of creation. The Council calls this revelation a lasting witness to God (9). When one looks at creation, when one sees the maintenance of nature --- so balanced and wonderful --- and even when one feels the shaking of earthquakes or the flames of conflagrations or the power of hurricanes --- creation's beauty and the majesty of the phenomena that humans can only admire but not control, like the very storm that Peter experienced on the Lake of Gennesaret (10): how tiny human beings appear before these manifestations of God's creation, of the Creator's omnipotence. They are witnesses of God -- - lasting witnesses. Whenever we open our eyes or our ears to catch the murmuring of creation, there God is speaking to us. This is natural revelation and for this reason Saint Paul tells us that no one who denies God can be excused or pardoned (11). One must be either very foolish or very arrogant to say that God does not exist. God can be seen even if it is only in the passing of creation. *The Lord will be passing by*-- the poets have written beautiful lines about earthly creatures who were seen as signs of God's *passing by*. As one is able to discover that a human person has passed by when one views a painting of a potted plant, so too we can experience the fact that God has passed by when we behold the preservation and maintenance of creation. Indeed, God's passing by is continual and so near to us.

When God is experienced in the gentle, whispering breeze, the Council tells us (12) that this is a more exquisite manifestation of God and refers to this as a supernatural revelation: God willed to reveal himself and manifest the mystery of his will. Through Christ and with him and through the Spirit of God human beings can enter into a relationship with the Father and share in the nature of God. God speaks with men and women as friends speak among themselves. Anyone who has a friend understands this beautiful comparison. There are no secrets; there is trust and understanding. Secrets are shared without fear of being informed on. Thus God speaks his secrets, his designs for creation, for human beings, for his Church. God speaks about his desires for humanity for God is the Lord of history. How beautiful to feel like Adam in paradise where the Bible says that God came down to converse with him! These are the delightful moments that Christ, the Son of Man, felt. In the scene that today's gospel reveals to us, Jesus went up the mountain alone to pray (13).

We often find Jesus in dialogue with his Father. He wanted to teach us that we must live in continuous dialogue with him and that we must live in imitation of his life. We should not live a life of sin or lies. Jesus also taught us that we must lose ourselves in the beauty and sublimity of God, giving thanks to God for favors received, begging pardon for our infidelities, and praying to him when the limitations of our power clash with the greatness asked of us. We must learn to understand that we have such a capacity and that God desires to fill up this capacity. This is the beauty of prayer and of the Christian life: coming to understand that a God who converses with human beings has created them and has lifted them up, with the capacity of saying *I* and *you*. What would we give to have such power as to create a friend to our liking and with a breath of our own life to make that friend able to understand us and be understood by us and converse intimately --- to know our friend as truly another self? That is what God has done; human beings are God's other self. He has lifted us up so that he can talk with us and share his joys, generosity and grandeur. He is the God who enters into dialogue with us. How can we, as men and women, live without praying? How can a person spend a whole life without thinking of God? How can a person leave empty that capacity for the divine and never fill it?

Sisters and brothers, if only my homily today could achieve this: to awaken an interest in finding what perhaps one has never found! Like Marcelino in the film, *The Miracle of Marcelino*, who went upstairs and there encountered Christ and spoke with him. How wonderful to be able to encounter Jesus! Perhaps we have not gone upstairs to the second floor and therefore, we live on the earth's surface and only encounter and dialogue with the miseries, intrigues and lies of humanity. We have not gone up to the second floor and we have not climbed the mountain, like Christ, to speak alone with our God. On the second floor we discover that we have within us a conscience. The Council says that God has placed within human beings a conscience that is like an intimate sanctuary, where God descends to speak alone with women and men, a place where people decide their own destiny (14).

Let us not be slaves to anyone. Christ says: *Call no one on earth teacher* (15). My, what great defiance! But here we speak about a holy defiance that allows us to encounter the only person who can be called Lord. When people find this Lord and Teacher who illuminates the truth in the intimacy of their conscience, then these people are truly free. We can then speak the truth because God confirms our words. Hopefully, my sisters and brothers, our people, devoted to the Divine Savior of the world, are able to understand this greatness! Hopefully our people are able to understand this plan of God, for indeed, we have been created with an ability to understand all of this. Yes, we have been created with an ability to understand that

we can dialogue with God and that God also desires to enter into dialogue with us and share his life with us.

Signs of God's presence among us

How can we know that God lives in the world? This is my second idea: the signs of God's presence. We have spoken about some natural signs that reveal God's passing by and we call this natural revelation. We have also spoken about marvelous signs that we call supernatural revelation. Here I refer to the second reading, for in the ninth chapter of his letter to the Romans, Saint Paul begins to confront a problem that causes him great pain --- so much pain that he wishes that *I myself were accursed and separated from Christ* (16) so that my sisters and brothers might understand.

Paul has entered into dialogue with God and has come to understand that the people of Israel are a sign of God's desire to come and save people. Yet when Saint Paul looks at this people he realizes that when God came into the world in the person of Jesus Christ, he was rejected. Paul is pained by the fact that people continue to place their trust in the Law of Moses and in the works of the Law. He is pained that people continue to place greater belief in human institutions rather than in God's love that justifies people and in a God who sent his only Son. Those who have come to a knowledge of Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of the Old Testament revelation know that all the scenes in the Old Testament are like a framework and support. Once Christ entered the world and died and rose and thus fulfilled all of God's promises and saved the world, there was no longer any need for circumcision or the Temple in Jerusalem or the priesthood of Aaron or the Mosaic Law. This was the great conflict that Paul confronted, a conflict that affected him so intimately that he said: *Even though God might condemn me, I would accept this condemnation so that my fellows citizens might understand the meaning of this grace of being a chosen people --- a grace that up to the present time they have not understood* (17). Israel is a sign of God's presence with us.

Paul, who had put aside the Mosaic Law and become a Christian, spoke about Israel and her privileges that were mentioned today in the second reading. He says with joy: *I am a Christian and I am going to speak sincerely with you. My conscience has been enlightened by the Holy Spirit and I assure you that I am not lying* (18). How difficult this was for Saint Paul. When he became a Christian he was treated like the other Jews who became Christian: a traitor, *anathema* (which means one who is cursed). Yes, Paul was cursed because he had become a Christian. He says: *My conscience joins me with the Holy Spirit in bearing me witness that I have great sorrow and constant anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and separated from Christ for the sake of my sisters and brother, my kin according to the flesh* (19).

Then Saint Paul begins to list the reasons why Israel is a sign of God's presence among humanity and states that they were adopted as God's children (20). God had said to no one else but the descendants of Israel that they were God's children.

Secondly, the people of Israel are blessed with God's presence (21). No other people's history saw the glory of God like Israel. When they journeyed through the desert, they experienced God's presence as they were guided through the night by a cloud of light and then protected from the heat of the sun during the day (22). When the Temple of Jerusalem was consecrated, a great cloud and light filled the Temple (23). The people thus experienced this presence and light of God.

Thirdly, the covenant (24). This week we were on Mount Sinai with Moses and Elijah and the transfigured Jesus (25). We know that on Mount Sinai God spoke with his people and said: *I will be your God and you will be my people* (26). This is my law. When Christ celebrated the Eucharist that we are celebrating this morning he placed all the richness of the Covenant on our altar: *this cup is the new covenant of my blood which will be shed for you* (27). There will be no other covenant for the covenant of Mount Sinai prefigured the covenant of the altar and today we celebrate that covenant. My sisters and brothers, those present in the Cathedral and those listening on the radio, we are the people of Israel who have entered into a covenant relationship with God and today we celebrate that covenant.

Fourth, the Law is another sign of God's presence and is another privilege that Saint Paul lists (28). The Bible says that no other people had received such a wise law because the Law of Israel came from the very wisdom of God. Through the Law, the people of Israel knew what God desired. Saint Paul praises the Law but he also says that the Law is not enough because Christ has come to fulfill the Law and to give us the strength to also fulfill the Law (29). The Law is a gift and even though the Ten Commandments were communicated to the people of the Old Testament, they are still valid today. Those who believe in Christ, the fullness of the Law, are also obliged by the Ten Commandments of the Old Testament. The Law is a privilege and enables us to know what God desires and what God does not desire.

Worship is also another privilege of Israel (30). Worship involved all the legislation and different forms of organization that were communicated to Moses and that led him to select a priestly family that would be responsible for celebrating the Temple rituals. These were marvelous liturgical celebrations in which God became present in order to receive from his people, represented by the priests, their humble homage, gratitude and repentance. In these celebrations God blessed the people who continued to experience themselves as the People of God, as the heart and soul of the nation.

The promises. Saint Paul said that the promises are another privilege given to the people of the Old Testament (31). They are a sign that God is present with the people. When people have been chosen to receive such sure and effective promises, we might be led to say that no one is able to write their biography before they are born; but if there is someone who can do this, it is Christ. For centuries the prophets announced the coming of the Messiah. These proclamations were God's promises. Therefore when Saint Paul speaks about Christ, he calls him the *Amen* (32), the fulfillment of God's promises. For this reason Saint Paul is pained by the fact that people have rejected this person who fulfilled the promises and preferred to remain with the promise. Saint Paul is saddened by the fact that people are more attached to the cult and human institutions than to the love of the God who inspires the cult.

And the list of privileges continues. The patriarchs (33). The New Testament authors rejoice when they make reference to the *God of Abraham, the God of Jacob and the God of Isaac* (34). These figures of our theological tradition are referred to as the eternal heights, persons who are distinguished because they touched God and were called friends of God. They received the first promises and are called the fathers of our faith. We still refer to Abraham as the father of our faith (35).

Lastly, Paul speaks about Christ, the Messiah, *God who is over all, blessed forever and ever* (36). Saint Paul enumerates a list of privileges and gives prominence to the patriarchs

because from their lineage, Jesus comes into the world. It is as though humanity, the People of God, have come in contact with that which is divine, a flower of privileged humanity. We refer to the Virgin who bore in her womb the Word of God who becomes man and appears in the world --- a son of the patriarchs and a son of God's promises. Paul says that it is Christ who must be accepted for this Christ is the incarnation of God's presence in the history of Israel. God was present throughout the history of Israel but in Christ becomes present in a unique way. God was present through his promises but then becomes present with the divinity of God when Jesus was born on that holy night in Bethlehem. The Virgin is not only a person but is a whole race for all the privileged people who received God's promises find that these promises become incarnated in Mary.

But in addition to Israel..... Kindly leave³ Christ is the fulfillment of the promises that had been made to Israel and I tell you, my sisters and brothers, that today with great joy and with her eyes fixed on Christ, the Church is fulfilling these promises. The Church continues to prolong the presence of God among women and men. Paul calls the Christian people, the Israel of God and this Israel of God is gathered together, here in the Cathedral. This Israel of God is not important because she is a child of Abraham but because she is a child of God's promise, because she was entrusted with bringing forth Christ into the world. The new Israel, the Church, is today entrusted with making our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, present in the world.

The Pope, great sign of the Church

This then brings me to my third idea: the Pope, the great sign of the Church, the great sacrament of the Church. The gospel of Saint Matthew was written in the Christian communities, in the New Israel and is the result of profound reflection --- a reflection that is very similar to that which we are engaged in at the present time. Read Saint Matthew and you will continually find the phrase, *this was to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophets* (39). Matthew is like one who transforms the old Israel into the Christian people. In today's passage, we find a description of the Church. It is good to keep this in mind and I say this especially to those communities that reflect on the gospel (if you wish I will send you this in writing). The whole gospel of Saint Matthew is like a poem that is sung in praise of the Kingdom of God --- the Kingdom of God is coming. The Kingdom of heaven that becomes present in this world and in the midst of humanity, comes in a child-Messiah and in the prolongation of what his Spirit will do as the Beatitudes become a reality. During the previous Sundays Jesus described for us, in humility and in parables, the kingdom of God --- a wide door that no one can close despite the bad fish and the weeds (40).

This leads us to reflect on chapters 13-18 of Saint Matthew's gospel. Matthew speaks to us about the human community where the Kingdom of God begins to become a reality. In this human, concrete community there is one person who is distinguished as the head. In these three chapters there are three passages that refer to Saint Peter and one of them is contained in today's reading where Saint Peter appears to be the primary figure in the boat (41). According to Saint Matthew, this ship in which some of the apostles are traveling and at a given moment Jesus comes toward them, even though the apostles experience confusion and believe they are seeing a ghost (42) --- this ship represents the Church, the community of women and men who believe in Christ. Christ gives this community certain individuals who will hold positions of authority: the apostles, among whom one is primary, Peter, the prince of the apostles --- the actual Pope is the successor of Peter.

Thus this morning it is good to reflect once again on these realities when our Church is persecuted. Even though many will deny this fact, the truth is that our Church is persecuted. This persecution is like the storm and tempest described in the gospel (43). Jesus draws near to us in the midst of this conflict, but we believe that we are seeing a ghost. We are fearful and separate ourselves from Jesus. Yet it is in these situations of trial that Jesus asks us to be courageous. In the passage from Saint Matthew's gospel, Peter appears as the one whose faith is put to the test. A special faith is necessary and so Jesus enters into a unique relationship with Peter that is different from his relationship with the other apostles. Jesus extends his hand to Peter (44) as a way of symbolizing the unity between Christ and Peter and the Church, the followers of Peter.

In the Council's document on the Church a reality is described that appears to me to be most important. Returning once again to the problem that Saint Paul confronted we can ask: if Israel is a sign of God's presence in the Old Testament and if the Christian Church is a sign of God's presence among us today, why is the Church not holy? Furthermore, why is the Church necessary? I want to propose the following three principles and I ask you to keep these in mind, especially during these times of conflict.

The first principle: God is in Christ and Christ is in the Church, but Christ extends beyond the Church. In other words, the Church cannot pretend to possess all that is Christ. Thus, we cannot say that only those who are members of the Church are Christian. There are many Christians who do not have a knowledge of the Church but perhaps live better lives than those who belong to the Church. Christ cannot be wholly contained within the Church. It is like one who puts a glass in a well. The glass becomes filled with water but does not contain all the water that is in the well. There is much fresh water outside the glass. Thus the Council says that there are many elements of the truth and grace that belong to Christ and are not in the Church (45). This is one of the great revelations, or perhaps it is better to say, a rediscovery of a great truth for those who are overly proud of belonging to the institutional Church. Know that we can say: not everyone in the Church is Christian and not all Christians are in the Church. Not all Christians are in the Church. There are many Christians who do not belong to our Church. Blessed be God that there many good people, many very good people outside the institutional Church: Protestants, Jews, Muslims, etc. I have experienced this in a very profound way this past week. The death of the Pope has not only shaken the institutional community that we call the Church but has transcended and extended beyond the Church because many people experience in the Pope a presence that, in their own way, seems to lead them to something beyond and greater than themselves.

The second principle is the following: the Church is a sign of God's presence and therefore, is necessary. Even though the Church cannot contain the whole Christ, yet the Church is a sign that Christ is in the world. Let us return to the comparison. The glass of water that is removed from the well does not contain all the water in the well but it is a sign that the water is from that specific well and that there exists a well from which one is able to obtain this glass of water. Listen to what the Council says: *They are fully incorporated in the society of the Church who, possessing the Spirit of Christ, accept her entire system and all the means of salvation given to her, and are united with her as part of her visible bodily structure and through her with Christ, who rules her through the Supreme Pontiff and the bishops. The bonds which bind men to the Church in a visible way are profession of faith, the sacraments, and ecclesiastical government and communion. He is not saved, however, who, though part of the body of the Church, does not persevere in charity. He remains indeed in the bosom of the Church, but, as it were, only in a "bodily" manner and not "in his heart"*

(46). Thus one is able to belong to the Church in a physical way, one can come to Mass here in the Cathedral and yet not be part of this Church “*in heart.*” It is not enough to say, *I and my family are baptized.* If we do not allow our lives to become conformed to the ways of Christianity, then we are not truly part of the Mystical Body of the Church.

We should not forget that all the children of the Church who live good lives should not attribute this fact to their own merits but rather should recognize that this is the result of a unique grace of Christ (47). If we do not respond to this grace with our thoughts, words and actions, then rather than be saved we will be judged more severely. In other words, we have the privilege of being aware of the means of salvation which Christ has bestowed upon us. In this glass that we call the institution, we find that the Pope, the hierarchy, and the sacraments are instruments that God has given us in order that we might obtain salvation. But it is not enough to have these instruments at our disposition. With the instruments we can still be condemned --- for we are able to possess these instruments of God’s grace and yet not take advantage of this grace of God and make all of this a part of our lives.

Therefore as we now talk about the Pope and the Church as an institution, let us keep in mind the following. Neither the priests nor bishops nor the Pope nor the sacraments nor the different ecclesiastical organizations contain everything that is Christ. But they are necessary to make Christ present and they serve as a tangible sign of God’s presence among us.

Therefore, the third principle is the following: not all the members of the Church possess or radiate this presence of God. Saint Paul states the same thing when he laments the fact that a people that has received so many privileges has rejected Christ (48). He states that by the grace of God there will always be a remnant. The Virgin, Saint Joseph, the apostles, the first Christians who converted from Judaism --- they are the remnant who were faithful to the promise and accepted Christ. On the other hand, the great majority of people continued to believe the old institution. We must be very careful as Catholics and as God’s ministers to not think that because we are bishops or priests or members of some ecclesiastical institution that we are the best Christians. We are a sign but we can be like the bell that is also a sign and calls out to people and yet remains outside. Thus Christ reminds us, all who are part of this institution, the visible elements of Christianity, that we are called to be true signs of God’s presence in the world.

Thus in conclusion my sisters and brothers, I call the Pope the great sign of the Church. Theology states: *Ubi Petrus ibi ecclesia* (Where Peter is, there is the Church). The Church acts in accord with Peter and this is one of the beautiful realities that we celebrate this week. We have experienced the location of the center of Catholicism --- something that other Christian Churches are unable to demonstrate. It is for this reason that I say that is necessary that this institution, this Church, must exist. The Pope in his humility believed he was a useless person. Nevertheless, when he met in Geneva with the Protestant Churches he said: *Our name is Peter. Peter is a fisher of men, Peter is a shepherd... And the name that we have chosen, that of Paul, sufficiently indicated the orientation that we wanted to give to our apostolic office. In my humble person Christ has desired to use me as a sign of his presence, the center of his Church⁴.*

The Second Vatican Council, taking its lead from the First Vatican Council, spoke about the Pope and said: *in order that the episcopate itself might be one and undivided, He placed Blessed Peter over the other apostles, and instituted in him a permanent and visible source and foundation of unity of faith and communion* (49). Once again the Council places before all the faithful this doctrine about the institution --- her perpetuity, power and the reason for the existence of the sacred primate of the Roman Pontiff and the infallible teaching --- as an

object of unshakeable faith. This dogma of faith was defined by the First Vatican Council in 1870 and stated that the Pope has a primacy that is infallible and that he is the supreme authority of the universal People of God.

Therefore, my sisters and brothers, the death of Pope Paul VI, in light of the Word of God that we have proclaimed today, tells us that God desires to dwell with humanity and that women and men have the ability to dwell with God. They are able to form a human organization that is called Church and where God lives with them. The true sign of this presence of God in his Church is the Pope. It is wonderful to ponder, if there were time for that now, the person and distinct physical characteristics of the Roman Pontiff who is charged with maintaining the foundation and the unity of the Church. We see that the Popes have had distinct personalities as they have assumed this role of leadership in the Church. Many of you, like I, can remember Pope Pius XI, Pius XII, John XXIII, and Paul VI as very distinct human beings. When John XXIII, clothed in papal robes spoke to the world on the balcony of Saint Peter's and addressed them as their Pastors he said: *Many are wondering: how will the new Pope act? Will he be a statesman, a diplomat, an organizer? All are mistaken, for all these things might serve as ornaments --- but what you look for in the Pope is a Pastor. I will try to be your Pastor, the representative of the Good Shepherd*⁵.

With regard to Paul VI, in a meeting with my beloved priests, I spoke about his charisma of being able to speak about Christ and the Church and how he defended the Church and yet had the courage to bring the Church to frontiers that no one could imagine. The whole concept of *aggiornamento* brought theology up to date, allowed the Church to enter into a dialogue with humanity, placed a primary importance on spiritual matters and brought the Church into an open dialogue with the world, etc. Each individual who assumes the role of Supreme Pontiff brings different gifts to this role but the institution remains the same. *You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church* (50).

Thus we conclude, my sisters and brothers, by giving thanks to the Lord for having created the institution of the Roman Pontiff and for having preserved this institution throughout the past twenty centuries. When it appears that everything has come to an end, when Pope Paul VI died and there is no clear sign concerning his successor, when the Church appears to be in great need and confused and alone, it is then that she is filled with hope. A new Pontiff will definitely come. The newspapers can ponder: How will he be? Who will it be? Perhaps it will be someone who is least talked about. The humble Cardinal Sarto⁶ could never have imagined that he would be the great successor of Leo XIII and the humble son of a farming family could never have imagined that he would be John XXIII. The history of the Church presents us with many surprises because the history of the Church is also the history of salvation --- it is the thoughts of God incarnated in human realities. Let us pray to the Lord, my sisters and brothers, for the new Pontiff who will soon be elected; let us pray that he will be worthy of the faith that we have in this Church.

Life of the Church

From this perspective of the Church, we can now understand why our Church is so vibrant here in the Archdiocese and the wisdom that should nourish this Church --- indeed the Church is nourished by the presence of God and the hope that people have in the Church.

Many Church events have occurred during these days and I want to mention a few of them. During these days several Congregations have celebrated the feast of their founders: July 31st, the feast of Saint Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits, August 1st, Saint

Alphonsus Liguori, the founder of the Redemptorists, August 8th, Saint Dominic, the founder of the Dominicans, August 15th, the patronal feast of the Assumption Sisters.

A visit to the Novitiate of the Carmelites of Saint Joseph enabled us to experience the joy of the religious life in our environment. The Instituto Secular Paulino (Lay Institute of the Paulists) held a solemn procession in the Seminary chapel. My sisters and brothers, be mindful of the fact that the religious life also flows over into the life of the laity and therefore as lay persons you are able to consecrate yourselves in a holy life that is consecrated to God.

Speaking about the world of the laity and the poor, yesterday I was deeply moved when I visited the community of la Fosa and celebrated Mass with the Christian communities that have arisen in so many parts of the capital. This afternoon we will visit the community of San Ramón.

Events of the week

We can see that this light of the Church that attempts to become brighter illuminates the grey environment that surrounds us. Therefore I ask all Catholics to work together so that we might truly become the People of God that reflects God's presence in the world.

You have also heard during the past week about the mysterious news surrounding the case of Mr. Matsumoto⁷. We have read very technical statements that lead us to reflect on the philosophical adage *qui nimium probat nihil probat* (one who proves too much, proves nothing). In any case, we know that you are able to conclude for yourselves concerning those who have responsibility in this case. There are many other cases like that of Mr. Matsumoto that remain clouded in mystery. No one should insult the good reputation and the life of innocent people in order to cover over these mysteries with the pretext of pseudo-investigations. We express our condolences to the Matsumoto family, especially his widow, and we have invited this family to participate in the celebration of the Eucharist this afternoon at 5:00pm in the chapel of the Hospital de la Divina Providencia.

We also lament the abduction of Mr. Tomás Armando Monedero⁸ and the assassination of his long time chauffeur, José Bruno Díaz Velázquez. We once again repudiate this recourse to violent means and we ask you to pray for the deceased and pray that peace will return to our land.

The Legal Aid Society has denounced legal anomalies in the capture and proceedings against the professors of ANDES and the capture of *campesinos* that occurred in Suchitoto in the villages of San Vicente, Cinquera, Apopa, Zacatecoluca, and Chalatenango. Through information that we received from the Legal Aid Society we have been made aware of the fact that in the last fifteen days twenty-two people have been captured because of violations of the famous Law of Public Order. Thanks to God, tomorrow a commission, with the support of more than fifteen hundred signatures, will appear before the Legislative Assembly to ask for the repeal of this law. They will request to remain in the Assembly Hall during the discussion of their petition.

In today's edition of *Orientación* we publish a letter from the Christians in Cinquera and I ask you to be mindful of this letter⁹. We denounced many cruel activities: the National Guard and ORDEN who are implicated in many crimes --- most recently they are responsible for the death of Irineo Valle who leaves behind a wife and several children. In their name, I ask you to continue to help *Caritas*, an Archdiocesan Organization that does much charitable work in the Diocese. I ask those who have to please help those who do not have.

We also want to express our gratitude to the Assembly for their gesture in declaring a state of mourning on the occasion of the death of the Pope. Hopefully this will lead them to be more careful and not continue to publish slanders against the Holy See and the Roman Pontiff.

My dear sisters and brothers, you can see that we are a Pilgrim People and that we have a great mission: to make God present in the world. Let us receive with honor this great reflection and let us thank the Lord for placing before us this Word of God. Let us go forward now, like those who prepare their lamps so that they might shine more brightly. Let us draw near to the altar, our Mount Sinai, where Jesus on the mountain of the transfiguration illuminates all people so that they might continue to walk in the midst of the grey situations of our history and illuminate with the clarity of God these situations of our nation.

¹ Pope Paul VI died on the night of Sunday 6 of August 1978.

² See *Orientación*, 13 August 1978.

³ A person burst into the cathedral shouting words not picked up in the recoding of the homily.

⁴ See Allocution of Paul VI to the Ecumenical Council of the Churches in Geneva, 10 June 1969.

⁵ See Homily of John XXIII in the ceremony of his coronation as Pope, 4 November 1958.

⁶ Giuseppe Sarto was Pope Pius X.

⁷ See “Aclaran muerte de Matsumoto”, *El Diario de Hoy*, 11 August 1978. The news item, relying on the extrajudicial statement of Augusto Antonio Caranza Parada, captured by the Nation Guard, stated that Sr Matsumoto was assassinated by members of FARN on the same day as his kidnapping. At the same time the final paragraph of this news item stated that it was denied before the judge of the Cámara Primera de lo Penal by its author who was tortured and never made such a declaration.

⁸ Armando Tomás Monedero, a grower of coffee and president of the sporting club FAS, was kidnapped on 10 August 1978 in Santa Ana. See *El Mundo*, 11 August 1978.

⁹ See “La comunidad Cristiana de Cinquera a sus comunidades hermanas de El Salvador”, *Orientación*, 13 August 1978.

Margin References (1) Mt 5,13-14: (2) Mt 17,3: (3) Ex 20,1-21: (4) Ex 3,6: (5) Ex 33,20: (7) 1K 19,11: (8) 1K 19,11-12: (9) DV 3: (10) Mt 14,30: (11) Rm 1,20-21: (12) DV 2: (13) Mt 14,23: (14) GS 16: (15) Mt 23,10: (16) Rm 9,3: (17) Rm 9,3: (18) Rm 9,1: (19) Rm 9,2-3: (20) Rm 9,4: (21) Rm 9,4: (22) Ex 13,21: (23) Ex 40,34: (24) Rm 9,4: (25) Mt 17,3: (26) Lv 26,12: (27) Mk 14,24: (28) Rm 9,4: (29) Gal 3,11-26: (30) Rm 9,4: (31) Rm 9,4: (32) 2Cor 1,20: (33) Rm 9,5: (34) Ac 3,13: (35) Rm 4,16: (36) Rm 9,5: (37) Gal 6,16: (38) Rm 9,8: (39) Mt 2,23: (40) Mt 13,31: (41) Mt 14,28-31: (42) Mt 14,26: (43) Mt 14,24: (44) Mt 14,31: (45) LG 15,16.: (46) LG 14: (47) LG 14: (48) Rm 11,5: (49) LG 18: (50) Mt 16,18.