

## THE CHURCH OF JOHN PAUL

**Twenty-sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time**  
**October 1, 1978**

**Readings:**

*Ezekiel 18:25-28*

*Philippians 2:1-11*

*Matthew 21:28-32*

We are going to title this homily: the Church of John Paul I<sup>1</sup>. This morning I invite you to make our reflection on the Word of God a homage of faith and kindness as we remember this person who in a little more than a month won the hearts of the world. There in the Vatican, his lifeless body is the object of veneration of those faithful who pass before his catafalque. In spirit we accompany this sorrowful line of people, this sorrowful line of a widowed, orphaned Church. Yet like the Virgin Mary at the time of the death and burial of her Son, we are strengthened by the sure hope of the resurrection. We know that with the person of the Pope, the words of Jesus are certain: *You are Peter*. Even though as mortal men two hundred and sixty-two Popes have died (this appears almost impossible) --- *yet the gates of the nether world shall not prevail against it* (1).

On Wednesday, the cardinals who have gathered together in Rome will celebrate the funeral Mass for the Pope and ten days later they will assemble in a solemn conclave to elect a new successor to Saint Peter. We pray for the eternal rest of the Pope because as a man he will be judged by God. God's justice is impartial for God treats Popes, Kings and humble Christians in the same way. The People of God implore God to be merciful because no one is saved by their own merits --- we have learned that here as we have reflected on the letters of Saint Paul --- rather one is saved by trusting in the infinite mercy and merits of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

I want to express my gratitude for the many expression of solidarity that the Chancery has received or that have been published in the newspapers. I hope that these expressions of condolences might be seen as a call for all of us to sincerely live as that Church that became so visible in the person of John Paul I: a Church of faith, sincerity, simplicity, love, etc.

Five Sundays ago here in the Cathedral, under circumstances that are foreseen only by the eternal God, the gospel of Saint Matthew presented Jesus in dialogue with the first Pope: *You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church* (2). As we commented on the gospel in our usual way, we said that the Archdiocese offered the new Pope, John Paul I, a lively community. Within the framework of joy that resulted from the election of the new Pope --- with his wide smile and openness to the world --- we described our hopes and our trials and the concrete events of the week. Who would have imagined five Sundays ago that today we would once again be asking the Pope, who accepted the offering of our Archdiocese and who is now deceased, to enable us to continue to be faithful to his path? Even though he has reached the goal of this pilgrimage on which we all journey, we will continue to follow and will try to be faithful to this Church that he enlightened.

It occurred to me to tell you that on the morning of September 29<sup>th</sup>, the light in his bedroom was lit. It is as though John Paul I had kept a light burning in the Church. Following the example of his predecessor, he made frequent reference to the Second Vatican Council and if he had said nothing else that would have been enough for him to stand out in the Church's history: follow that path, follow the burning light of Vatican II and the Church's teaching --- they are authentic Christian paths. Even though many people have desired to manipulate these teachings and accommodate this doctrine to their own way of thinking and acting, we can say with total impartiality that we have seen the attitude, the ministry and the teaching of John Paul I and we have nothing to regret. Wherever we go we must continue to walk in this light. The light of the Church's teaching is like the burning lamp that John Paul has left us: Vatican II, the encyclicals, the doctrine and the attitudes of the Church.

### **Life of the Church**

Holy Father, what are the events of this past week that this Church of the Archdiocese can offer to you who have enlightened us? We offer you joyful, hard-working, ministering communities like the one that I had the opportunity to visit last Sunday. In Aguilares the people celebrated the first anniversary of the establishment of their clinic. There, three doctors and a collaborative team, together with Father Octavio Cruz and the Sisters of the Sacred Heart have been able to extend a helping hand to so many poor and infirm *campesinos*.

In the devoted community of Comasagua, a team of catechists met with me last Tuesday to study together with their pastor, Father Chalo, the pastoral problems that they confront as they sincerely attempt to serve the people in this area. There are hypocritical people there who try to frighten those who follow our pastoral guidelines and they are terrorizing the people.

Holy Father, we also offer you the community of Guazapa. There, on the feast of Saint Michael, we celebrated this feast with the Carmelite Sisters of Saint Joseph and the priests of the Vicariate. I told the people: *I am not going to speak to you words that I read in some book but want to speak to you about the sad news that was just announced on the radio --- the Pope has died.* In light of the ministry of the Church and the Pope we reflected on the person of Saint Michael, the patron of the Church. As part of their priestly ministry, the Archangel, the Pope and the whole Church offer to God the homage of the people; as the Bible says: *they make this offering in the form of incense* (3). All people are able to contribute their grains of incense, their own actions. In a prophetic sense, Saint Michael and the Pope guard the Church's true doctrine when confronted with so many malicious lies. They defend the Church in her struggle against evil and deceit and lies. As the archangels of God guided the steps of people and nations, so, too, the Pope, as pastor, has guided the history of the Church.

On the following day, in the community of Nejapa, we celebrated the feast of Saint Jerome.

This is one of the communities of the Vicariate of the Department of Libertad. It was there that we gathered together yesterday in Santa Tecla to study the Pastoral Letter. This

letter focuses on new problems and there were interesting and profound questions --- all of which enables us to feel that the Holy Spirit is guiding the communities of the Archdiocese.

With great love I tell you, Holy Father, that in the community of my birth, Ciudad Barrios, as a child of this community and together with the people there, we gave homage to the Bishop of the Diocese, Bishop Rivera, on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of his priestly ordination.

This morning in the community of Plan de Pino, the Carmelite Missionaries who are assisting us in the Polyclinic in Laguana (Chalatenango) and Plan de Pino are preparing a group of young people who will experience Pentecost --- the coming of the Holy Spirit in the sacrament of Confirmation. This celebration will also mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the arrival of the Sisters in El Salvador.

While speaking about the religious life --- the Redemptorists have celebrated fifty years of missionary work in El Salvador. The Sisters of Charity prepared some young people in their school, Escuela Walter Deininger, for the sacrament of Confirmation. On Tuesday in Cojutepeque, the Belgian Sisters of Saint Nicholas made a beautiful offering as two young *campesina* women made their profession. These Sisters are also involved in the ministry of vocational promotion.

This week the Oblate Sisters of Divine Love celebrated the tenth anniversary of ministry in La Escuela Catalina Dimaggio where they are doing much good for La Colonia La Luz.

The Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Heart provide our communities with great hope. They will soon begin to minister in some of the parishes of the Archdiocese.

The Sisters of the Sacred Heart who were attacked by selfish individuals who do not want anything to disturb their wretched interests --- these Sisters have been courageously defended by the professors and staff at the school. They have said to those who slander the Sisters that they are aware of their tricks: at this time when final grades are due people have begun to slander this prestigious school for perverse ends. They said that they were witnesses to the teaching that is given at the School. The teaching is not Marxist or some unhealthy criticism of our National Anthem. Rather the School attempts to cultivate a critical sense in the students so that they will know how to analyze history and be autonomous in their lives. In this way the students will not become simply one more number among a mob of people. Yet there are those who are interested in having people who will neither develop themselves nor criticize the present system.

I also want to speak about some of the Diocesan activities in our community. I had the pleasure of participating in a round-table discussion at the Universidad José Simeón Cañas. I was invited to participate in a dialogue about my Pastoral Letter. This dialogue on such a pertinent theme took place in an environment of culture and knowledge. There were a number of *campesinos* present. The present reality and my Pastoral Letter can be erroneously interpreted unless all of this is enlightened by the light of the gospel --- and even then there is the risk of misinterpretation.

I was greatly consoled by the fact that a group of men and women who work in the market and are involved in a wonderful work of human promotion (especially promotion of

women) --- this group participated in a course for people from all of Central America in El Centro Ana Guerra de Jesús.

Also the work of our Catholic colleges and schools involved in their end-of-year celebrations, offering to God the educational work of the Church.

Also Holy Father – and we ask you to intercede for us now you are in heaven – the triduum of prayers for Nicaragua which we celebrated here in the cathedral ecumenically since members of several non-Catholic Christian communities took part. Our Church is in solidarity with the bishops and people of Nicaragua and renews its support for the Nicaraguan hierarchy thus, as the Pope said, respecting the autonomy of particular Churches. We cannot suggest criteria for the pastors who are living these problems but can only support what Mons. Obando, the bishops and others responsible for the Church in Nicaragua decide in their quest for peaceful solutions; and like them we hope the will of the majority of the people is respected, that all parties are invited to dialogue, that favorable conditions for dialogue are created and that in this way the people's will is effective in the governing of Nicaragua, which is the true meaning of democracy.

We will continue this prayer for Nicaragua at 5.00 this afternoon during a holy hour in the chapel of the Divine Providence Hospital. And we are asking all parishes for financial help to support our needy brethren In Nicaragua.

Finally, among other things, the Church of the Archdiocese, on the eve, or I should say, beginning today as we celebrate the month of the Holy Rosary, we embrace one of the most beautiful testimonies of John Paul: his child-like love for the Virgin. We say child-like love because this diocese wants to unite itself to the whole Church as we celebrate the Universal Day of the Child. The evangelical phrase that inspires our homage to all children and that provides us with the key to honoring them is the following: *whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it* (4). In his brief Pontificate, John Paul has left us several photographs of his warm and kind contact with children. More than photographs, he has left us his child-like spirit that enabled him to understand the way that children trust their mothers. From this perspective he applied this same love and trust to the relationship between people and God --- this God who loves us more than a mother and this people who have greater need of this love than a child.

In his discourse when he assumed this role of leadership in the Church, the Pope said that the Virgin had accompanied him in his youth, in his priesthood and during the time that he was a bishop. So now, during his Pontificate (which unfortunately was very brief) the Virgin, as mother, would continue to accompany him and he, as child, would continue to follow her<sup>2</sup>. As we begin this month dedicated to the Holy Rosary we remember his voice and his words exhorting us to trust in the Virgin and to pray to her. Where the rosary has fallen victim to the secularist trend, let us remember that no matter how powerful this secularist trend might be in the world, the world will always have a need for prayer and for Mary. As much as the world might feel autonomous before God, yet those who believe in God, experience in a profound way a greater need to unite the world to God. No more beautiful chain than the rosary could unite us to God.

My sisters and brothers, for this reason I say that this is the Church that has accomplished these realities to which we could add so many other parish and family events that have occurred in our diocese. As this Pilgrim Church of the Archdiocese is illuminated, this

Church that throughout the world is in mourning over the death of the Pope, we ask: what is this Church? I answer that question with the title of my homily: this is the Church of John Paul because this is the same Church as that of John the Baptist and the apostle, Paul. If it appears that in our era people do not think of precursors and apostles, yet people arise in our midst who want to call themselves John --- like the unforgettable John XXIII and John Paul I. Intelligent, very intelligent people arise in our midst, more intelligent than those who continually criticize the Church, intelligent like Paul VI, Jean-Baptiste Montini who wanted to be called Paul. Like Paul and despite his weaknesses, infirmities, and aches, for fifteen years he fearlessly provided us with the witness of his life. He stood before the General Assembly of the United Nations and showed the whole world the paths that they must walk.

John and Paul --- why did they want to be called by these names? Why did our beloved Pope who has just died, join these two names together: John Paul? I find in today's readings --- and excuse me for saying this --- but I believe there is reason for having been presented with the readings that we have just heard. These readings enable us to understanding the spirit of John XXIII, Paul VI and John Paul's preaching. It was not their doctrine nor a doctrine that had been manipulated by the world but rather the authentic doctrine that God revealed to the precursor, John the Baptist and today Jesus tells us: *John came to you teaching you the ways of justice* (5). What most opportune words! It is as though Jesus himself is speaking to us, pointing toward the deceased Pontiff and reminding us of the words spoken about John the Baptist: *John came to you teaching you the ways of justice*.

In the second reading, Paul offers us two unmistakable characteristics of the Church that were preached by the Popes who in our time called themselves John and Paul. Like the apostle Paul, John Paul I, Paul VI, John XXIII and all the other Popes proclaimed this Church as a Church of communion. We heard the words: *complete my joy by being of the same mind* (6). It seems that we are listening to the voice of John Paul who during his brief Pontificate often repeated this call to love: *complete my joy by being of the same mind, with the same love, united in heart, thinking one thing* (7). This is the Church of communion. Finally, Paul in the last part of today's reading speaks about this Church that is enlivened by the mystery of Christ (8). He describes Christ with the most sublime characteristics that are found in the Bible: the pre-existence of Christ, Christ who humbles himself even to death on the cross and Christ who has been exalted for all eternity. This is the Christ who accompanies the Church.

### **The Church of John Paul is the Church of John the Baptist**

My sisters and brothers, let us briefly analyze the depth of this doctrine that the Church of John Paul is offering us --- a precious inheritance that we accept from his hands still warm with life.

What is this Church of John? In today's first reading and in the parable of the two sons one reality becomes apparent: the personal responsibility of men and women to fulfill the will of God. The words directed to the two sons are spoken to all of humanity: *Today I want you to work in my vineyard; today as you live your vocation I want to give you life* (9). All of us who are sharing in this reflection on the Word of God have a vocation, a vocation that is life-giving; a vocation of understanding; a professional vocation; a vocation marked with certain characteristics --- and here the Lord commands us: his will is rooted in his justice. John came to teach us the justice of God and the commandments of the Lord(10). John Paul, who was a great catechist, shared his catechetical teachings with very solemn audiences and

spoke to these people, like every catechist, about the law of God that exhorts us to be good. This is the will of God and the mission of women and men.

As we hear the command of God, we can respond in two different ways as is indicated in the parable (11): *I will not go; non serviam; I do not want to serve you.* This is the cry of sinners, the cry of rebellion, and unfortunately it is the cry of the majority of people who believe that they have been given freedom to reject God rather than to freely search for God. How many spoiled children does God have: *I do not want to.* In our relationship with God we are often like those children who stomp their feet in front of their mother: *No, I do not want to. I won't!*

The other son, educated and erudite says: *yes, it is my pleasure to go,* (12) but he does not go. The first one repents and says to his father: *I will go* or says nothing to his father and simply goes and does the will of his father. Jesus asks: *which of the two did his father's will?* (13). All of you and I are able to respond in the same way as those who listened to Jesus: *the first one, the one who said he would not go but then went. Not the other son, well educated but disobedient.*

Christ makes an application, a very difficult application. Remember that we are in the section of Matthew's gospel where he reflects with the early Christian communities and presents us with the conflict, the crisis that the Church will always have to confront: act according to the will of God or according to the desires of human beings? The leaders of Israel had gathered together in front of Jesus: the priests, political rulers, and professionals and Jesus, with no fear, speaks to them: *tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the Kingdom of God before you, the leaders of the people* (14). Believe me, my sisters and brothers, it gives me great pleasure to recall these words of Jesus and to be able to proclaim these words to all sinners --- and I the first among all sinners --- if we trust in the Lord, if we had the audacity to tell the Lord: *I will not serve* and if we have looked for him on paths of forbidden pleasure or illicit gains (like the tax collectors and prostitutes), Jesus tells us that we will enter the Kingdom of God before those who think they are on the path to the kingdom. Who knows? Who obeyed?

Jesus says: *When John came to you in the way of righteousness, you did not believe him; but tax collectors and prostitutes did. Yet even when you saw that, you did not later change your minds and believe him* (15). The leaders of the people did not believe John, rather they slandered him when he preached justice to them. They called him possessed and if the term *communist* had existed at that time, they would have called him a communist. All those who preach justice and find themselves before the brick wall of those who do not want to change their ways or those who do not want their relationships with others to be guided by justice --- all these persons will be branded like John the Baptist and all those who tried to imitate him. They will be called names by those who do not believe. Jesus said: *John came ... but you did not believe him. But on the other hand, sinners listened to him and heard words of hope -- a hope that God could forgive sinners.*

Since we are dedicating this reflection to John Paul, among the many events that occurred during his brief Pontificate, one that greatly touched me concerns a woman who approached him during one of the general audiences and told him: *Holy Father, I feel so empty, so sinful -- will the Lord save me and forgive me?* The Pope asked: *How old are you?* *Thirty,* the woman responded. The Pope then said: *Why are you so anxious? You are young and you have in front of you forty years, more or less. Why not take advantage of this time to repent*

*and walk on the path of righteousness.* To walk along the path that John the Baptist had illuminated for the prostitute --- this is the light that the Church shines forth and hopefully, my sisters and brothers, my humble words could have the great honor of becoming a ray of light and hope that would shine on the houses of prostitution and the dwelling places of criminals and the taverns where people are involved in so many different forms of vice --- this would in no way embarrass me if my words could reach all of these places. I know that in many different places people are listening to me and hopefully today the words of Christ come to those who most need to hear it: *the tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the Kingdom of God before you because when John the Baptist came and proclaimed repentance and justice, they listened to him. But you, arrogant and deceitful --- you criticize and distort the gospel. Hopefully it is not too late when you decide to repent of your mistakes* (16).

The other day someone said that I asked people to applaud the death of the Dean of the University. When have I ever done something like that? As I have told you, I have traveled through many communities and I am pained by the sad campaign that is being carried out by ORDEN (Democratic Nationalist Organization). They tell the *campesinos* that they should not listen to YSAX; they should not listen to the bishop because he is a communist; they should not read *Orientación* or the Bible and they should become members of ORDEN if they want to be protected. There are courageous Christians who have responded with these words: *We prefer to die and we know that at some time we will all die, but we know that the bishop is our Pastor and he leads us along the path of the gospel.* So many foolish things are spoken and attributed to me. Ask the people: *Did you hear him say that?* Often the response will be: *No, but people say...* This is the greatest foolishness --- to criticize another without providing that person an opportunity to defend him/herself. *John came to you preaching the ways of justice but you did not believe him* (17).

Today's first reading ratifies the thoughts expressed in the parable. Ezekiel lived at a time when Israel was punished with exile. The people believed that their ancestors were sinners and therefore they were paying the debt of their ancestor's sins. The prophet Ezekiel is one who places personal responsibility on the sinner. Remember when the apostles asked Jesus about a blind man: *who sinned, this man or his parents?* Jesus says: *Neither he nor his parents sinned; it is so that the works of God might be made visible through him* (18). The prophet Ezekiel says that when there is sin, each one in his/her own conscience is responsible before God.

Let us not forget this, my sisters and brothers. It is true that the bishops in Medellin said that structural sin and community sin are realities and they refer to these as social sin (19). Yet despite the setting and situation, God is not going to ask an account of the structures. Rather all men and women who live in these structures will be asked to give an accounting of themselves. Ezekiel says that the judgment of God will go according to God's design (20). If an evil person has repented and lives now in accord with justice and righteousness, then this person will live. God will save the person because he/she has repented and changed. If a good person, even a most holy person, becomes perverted and acts in an evil way, then that person will die because of his/her evil acts (21). The prophet says: *The house of Israel says, "the Lord's way is not fair!"*(22) *Is it my way that is not fair, house of Israel, or rather is it not that your ways are not fair? Therefore, I will judge you, house of Israel, each one according to his ways* (23).

My sisters and brothers, everyone is responsible for their own destiny. There are many people who believe in blind destiny, as though some power or force were moving them and

they are unable to resist evil. This is not a correct or a good way to think. It is as though one is saying to God: *you have not created me as a free person*. The human person always has the last word and decides about good and evil and heaven and hell. God does not decide these realities but has given power to every individual to make a decision. If you want to do evil and persevere in evils ways, you will die in your injustices: you will die forever. In other words, you will be condemned. You will find on the path of evil tax collectors and prostitutes such as are mentioned in today's readings and we could add many other kinds of sinners, including those who are responsible for the sinful structures, those who desire governmental power or economic power for their own selfish motives --- all of these people are on the path of sin. If they do not repent and change their ways, if they do not seek the way of justice, they will not live.

In light of this principle of God's moral authenticity, it would be wrong to be awaiting the new Pope to see if he agrees or disagrees with my way of thinking. With John Paul there was not enough time to put him into some category. Some hoped that he would support their way of thinking and others that he would support a different position --- as though individual morality depended on the Pope and not on the individual. True, the Pope is the teacher who illuminates, but following the light depends on each individual person. One did not have to wait for John Paul to say that selfish, materialistic capitalism is evil and thus be able to say that the Pope is allied with communists. When the Pope said that one could not collaborate with communists the people said that the Pope was allied with capitalists. It becomes very easy to interpret words when one is prejudiced.

The human person has a conscience and the Pope is a teacher who in the name of God enlightens our conscience. But when people become overwhelmed by passion, they become blinded. How many times have we seen a good wife cry because her husband fell in love with another woman --- he has become overwhelmed with passion and it is difficult to believe the voice of God that cries out: *this is illicit*. This was the situation of John the Baptist when he spoke to Herod who had taken as his wife, the wife of his brother (24). John the Baptist said: *this is illicit!* Herod commanded him to be executed and thus John was decapitated. This is the destiny of the prophets. Since the prophets point out the most painful and burning scars, they run the risk of being ignored.

Who will be Pope? What lines will he follow? Whoever he is, he must be the voice of John (25). John came and preached justice and people, regardless of who is Pope, have to look for the paths of justice, love, goodness and holiness. No matter how holy the Pope, those who are unjust and do not repent, will be condemned; the Pope will be saved.

### **The Church of John Paul is the Church of Saint Paul**

My second thought is taken from Saint Paul: the Church of John Paul is the Church of Saint Paul, the Church of communion. In the second reading today Saint Paul exhorts us to be united in heart and teaches us the causes of disunity. My sisters and brothers, it would be wonderful to make an examination of conscience before the Pope who worked, during this brief period of time, for the unity of the Church. He moved beyond the walls of the Catholic Church and worked for an ecumenical unity and with his wide smile he envisioned and hoped for this world-wide unity.

Listen to Saint Paul who tells us that the causes of disunity can be found in people who are selfish or act in vainglory or become focused on their own personal interests. (26) All of



this appears in today's reading and is pointed out as being the cause for the great unrest in our society. If one is envious then there is no nobility in one's actions. Envy wants to entrap those who can do good and rejoices in another's misfortune. There is so much envy and many good people are being entrapped.

My dear sisters and brothers, to remind you of the person of John Paul, especially in light of this call of Saint Paul to clothe ourselves in a faith that is not ostentatious, I refer to the words that he spoke eight days ago when he took possession of the Basilica of Saint John Lateran: *the poor --- they are the Church's true treasure. Therefore they should be assisted without being humiliated or offended by the ostentation of wealth or by money badly spent on futile things instead of being invested, where possible, in mutually advantageous enterprises.*<sup>3</sup> See how the Pope ratifies the fact that the Church cannot be anything else but a Church that is concerned about and able to identify with the poor. The poor represent the presence of the Lord: *whatever you did for one of these least brothers or sisters of mine, you did for me* (27).

In this Church of communion, Saint Paul also presents us with the foundation of unity. What is it that will enable us to resolve our great problem of disunity? Saint Paul points out that we must clothe ourselves with an attitude of humility and a concern for the interests of other people (28). How certain are these indications! Look at those persons who are proud, who never want to see themselves as less than someone else, who want to be in the midst of everything, they never seem to fit in anywhere and therefore no one seems to fit in with them. On the other hand, those who are humble, those who as Saint Paul says look for their true happiness in serving others --- this is John Paul --- the one who achieved the highest place among people: the Pope, and yet from this lofty place he remembered his origins: the son of a humble workers and one who called all people to opt in a preferential way for the poor, to opt for simplicity. The one who did not want to be carried about in the *sede gestatoria*, this humble and simple man is the instrument, the model for modern men and women to become instruments of peace.

Between the readings, the choir from Tejutla sang the beautiful hymn of Saint Francis of Assisi: *praise to you, Lord, and may you be adored. For that man, Saint Francis of Assisi, a poor man, called all creatures to praise you.*

### **Christ, our Lord**

The most wonderful foundation for all of this is found in my last thought: Christ, our Lord. Saint Paul concludes the reading today and invites us to *have among ourselves the same attitude that is found in Christ Jesus* (29). He then describes this Christ and this is the finishing touch of our reflection: Christ. If the modern Popes have touched the world by their example and wisdom, it is because they have used all their talent to express this great truth: Christ lives in the Church. The Church is nothing more than a prolongation of Christ's mission.

Paul VI had a special grace that enabled him to speak about this relationship between Christ and the Church. In today's reading, Paul speaks to us about this Christ who encourages the Church.

This Christ who pre-existed in eternity, was in the form of God and existed before he was conceived in the womb of the Virgin. Saint John tells us: *in the beginning was the Word* (30) and this eternal Word has no beginning or end.

Secondly, Christ became man and this is what Saint Paul calls *kenosis*, a Greek word and I would like to you to become familiar with this word because it expresses the beauty of our faith in Christ (31). *Kenosis* means to empty oneself, to strip oneself of the rank of God, just like a sovereign ruler who puts aside the throne and royal cloak and everything else, and then clothes himself like a *campesino* and appears like any other person. Like here in the Cathedral, if Christ were to be among the people who are kind enough to listen to me, I might be unable to discover this reality because the Son of God was clothed like any other man. Even more, it was not enough to appear like the rest of men, rather this Christ humbled himself and took on the form of a slave (32). He died on the cross like a crucified slave and like a common thief, like the forgotten one of Israel whom people said should be crucified outside the city, like rubbish. This is Christ, the God who humbles himself unto *kenosis* --- the profound emptying of self.

Thus as Saint Paul concludes this beautiful hymn, he states: *Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord* (33).

My beloved sisters and brothers, this is the Church's glory: to carry within herself the whole *kenosis* of Christ. In fact, it is for this reason that the Church must be humble and poor. An arrogant Church, a Church that finds support among the powers of the world, a Church without *kenosis*, a Church filled with pride and self-sufficiency --- this is not the Church of Saint Paul nor the Church of *kenosis* nor the Church of John Paul nor the Church of the authentic Popes. The truth is that John Paul said in his inaugural discourse that he felt like Saint Peter who, when he began to walk on the water, suddenly began to stagger in fear. Then he heard Jesus say: *Why are you terrified, O you of little faith?* (34).

This is the power of the Church and not the power of human beings. One month ago, like a beggar, the Pope during the ceremony of his installation as Supreme Pontiff in Saint Peter's Square --- you saw this on television --- he appeared like a beggar asking each cardinal for the goodness of his friendship and collaboration and assistance ... *because we never imagined that we would be raised to these heights, help me!* This is humility and this is the *kenosis* of the Church: to experience that this humble, poor Christ, emptied himself of the greatness of God, and now accompanies this Church that must characterize herself with the same *kenosis*.

At the same time, she has great hope in the glorification because this Easter Church, this Church of the resurrection, this Church that will have no end has been made this way by the One whose name is above every other name (35). We honor this Christ in our celebration of the Eucharist today. We also want to bring to our Eucharist the anguished voice of our country, of this Church of *kenosis* and glorification, of this Church of communion and conversion, of this Church of Saint John the Baptist and Saint Paul of Tarsus, of this Church that has become a modern Church with Paul VI, and John XXIII and John Paul I, of this Church that we want to live here in the Archdiocese, with our own proper identity and in the midst of the conflicts of our history.

### **Events of the week**

Thus my sisters and brothers we have to live with this confidence of the students and afflicted family members who have come to us to denounce and clarify the true causes and the events that have led to the closing of our University.

The students have stated their intentions and their displeasure with the massive failures that were handed down in the course Mathematics III. They have complained about the brutal repression by the University Police that is under the control of the National Armed Forces. They lament the disappearance of Guillermo Iraheta and the death of José Armando Vega García (a student) who was shot in the back and was hospitalized for a week in El Seguro Social. They are also saddened by the death of Dr. Carlos Rodríguez, Dean of the School of Economics and by the death of a group of prisoners who were being held in the prison of the University Police. How contradictory these events! What do the lawyers say about all of this? What do the professional men and women say about this humiliation of their Alma Mater? Especially when they must face the sarcasm of the police and the prison system where prisoners disappear and are killed in the most esteemed cultural center of El Salvador. The lies of the security forces are most clear when looking at the events surrounding the disappearance of Guillermo Atilio Iraheta Valle, who was employed for eleven years in ANDA<sup>4</sup>. His wife and six children have seen the barbaric way in which he was beaten. The Red Cross is witness that they were not allowed to help him. What is ANDA doing with its employees, even when its president is a colonel ?

We also regret the kidnapping of Dr Alfonso Castro Sam. What were the motives ?

We wish to request, in the name of the family of the ANDA employee, Guillermo Atilio Iraheta Valle, for the affliction of his wife and his orphaned children, that this poor woman's appeal be heard who has gone begging for justice to the Supreme Court of Justice, the Army Headquarters and the President of ANDA. Yet everywhere we hear voices exhorting people to be patient as though there were no way to resolve these unjust cases.

In this authentic Church we have to lament these injustices and we cannot tolerate these injustices --- the abduction of a young woman on Monday who was wounded near the zoo and was supposed to be recuperating in the Hospital Rosales. It has been stated by judicial authorities that this young woman was in the custody of the National Police and yet the Police say they have no knowledge about this event. This young woman's family is now fearful about her fate. We ask that justice might intervene in this case so that another cruel abuse of power can be avoided.

In Comalapa, María Evangelina Galdámez, nineteen years old, has been captured and no one knows where she has been taken. The *campesinos* in Cinquera and San Pedro Perulapán have been repressed. We ask for mercy for this zone that has already been severely beaten and abused. At least twenty-three *campesinos* have disappeared and twenty-five have been assassinated by members of ORDEN (the Democratic Nationalist Organization), the army and other security forces. On September 27<sup>th</sup>, the elderly Jesús Villeda, seventy-three years old, was killed by members of ORDEN who slashed his body with machetes. Twenty-two other people are being held as political prisoners. These people are being systematically harassed --- *campesinos* who organized as a group, see their houses burned and they are threatened with death.

At the same time we must refer to the bodies that were found on the Apulo road --- the bodies of Mauricio Mendoza Flores and Manuel de Jesús Campos. They were catechists who

gathered together with other Christians --- and these other Christians are on a list and they have been told that they can be protected if they become members of ORDEN. This is unjust pressure.

The Church cannot be silent in face of this abuse --- workers have a right to organize themselves. The unionized workers of CEI denounce the fact that the facilities at Soyapango, Acajutla and Ahuachapán continue to be controlled by the National Guard.

FUSS has denounced the capture of José Ramírez Barrera --- one of their workers. Six union leaders were fired from their jobs at Industrias Metálicas Prado. In effect this action has destroyed the power of this union organization. Let us also remember --- even though many days have passed and we have not spoken about this --- but let us remember that in Las Minas de San Sebastián more than 200 *campesino* families are dying of hunger --- they are not given any work and the labor situation has not been resolved.

The Church also suffers with those who were injured in Bambural. We also want to place before you a courageous testimony of the President of ISTA. Speaking about the disproportionate distribution of land he said: *In El Salvador there is a barrel of gun powder and the fuse is lit and about to explode*<sup>5</sup>. I want to remind you here about the comparison that someone told me: *ISTA has become a circus lion that has no teeth.*

My sisters and brothers, let us now celebrate our Eucharist for we have reflected on the divine Word of the prophets, a Word that has come alive with the recent Popes, a Word that has delivered a message to us through the death of John Paul, a Word that proclaims to us that our Church is one of conversion and gives hope to sinners. At the same time this is a terrible Word for those who are not willing to repent and change their lives but for those who repent this Word is a one of love and a Word of open arms. Indeed our Church takes on the characteristic of *kenosis* --- the Church empties herself, and is a Church of humility, a Church that trusts in the hope of the glory of the risen Christ. This is what we are going to celebrate now: *Christ has died! Christ is risen! Christ will come again.*<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Pope John Paul 1 died on September 28 1978.

<sup>2</sup> See Homily of John Paul 1 in the official inaugural Mass of his pontificate (3 September 1978), *Osservatore Romano*, 10 September 1978.

<sup>3</sup> Homily of John Paul 1 during the Eucharistic celebration in St John Lateran (23 September 1978), *Osservatore Romano*, 1 October 1978.

<sup>4</sup> Guillermo Atilio Iraheta Valle was an employee of ANDA and responsible for one of the water pumps opposite the entrance to the National University. On September 18 1978, after two university watchmen were assassinated, other watchmen captured him, beat him and pulled him into the university compound. Nothing has been heard of him since. His family are searching for him and calling for his release but no group is accepting any responsibility. See *El Diario de Hoy*, 21 & 25 September 1978.

<sup>5</sup> *El Diario de Hoy*, 28 September 1978.

*Marginal References* (1) Mt 16,18: (2) Mt 16,18: (3) Rv 8,3: (4) Mt 18,3: (5) Mt 21,32: (6) Ph 2,2: (7) Ph 2,2: (8) Ph 2,6-11: (9) Mt 21,28: (10) Mt 21,32: (11) Mt 21,29: (12) Mt 21,30: (13) Mt 21,31: (14) Mt 21,31: (15) Mt 21,32: (16) Mt 21,31-32: (17) Mt 21,32: (18) Jn 9,2-3: (19) M 2,1: (20) Ez 18,27: (21) Ez 18,26: (22) Ez 18,25: (23) Ez 18,30: (24) Mt 14,1-11: (25) Mt 21,32: (26) Ph 2,3: (27) Mt 25,40: (28) Ph 2,3-4: (29) Ph 2,5: (30) Jn 1,1: (31) Ph 2,7: (32) Ph 2,8: (33) Ph 2,9-10: (34) Mt 14,31: (35) Ph 2,9.