

## THE CHURCH, THE VINEYARD OF THE LORD

**Twenty-seventh Sunday of Ordinary Time  
October 8, 1978**

*Isaiah 5:1-7*

*Philippians 4:6-9*

*Matthew 21:33-43*

My sisters and brothers, I would prefer to reflect in silence on the beautiful readings that describe in the language of love, the sad history of God's love for us and the ways in which we have failed to respond to that love. The prophet Isaiah says: *Let me now sing of my friend, my friend's song concerning his vineyard* (1). Today we feel courted by this hymn of love. As we listen to this poem we are not surprised but rather we feel that we are protagonists of this love between God and all of humanity.

I am going to title today's homily: the Church, the vineyard of the Lord. As usual I am going to present three thoughts: first, the Lord planted his Church in the world as a vineyard; second, in this vineyard which is the Church, the crises of the Kingdom of God are reflected; third, through the Church, Christ will be victorious.

In light of these thoughts we are going to see if our Church in the Archdiocese is being the faithful vineyard that the Lord planted. From the perspective of this vineyard we see that there is a continual crisis in the world and we will enlighten this reality that surrounds us. This is another way in which people can come to an awareness of the authenticity of God's message that is communicated by this Church-vineyard.

### **The Lord planted his Church in the world like a vineyard**

In the first place, the Lord planted his Church like a vineyard. It is true that during the time of the prophet Isaiah the Church of Christ did not exist. But we have just proclaimed in the responsorial psalm (2) that the vineyard is like the people of Israel, the favored people of God whom God is cultivating, announcing and perfecting his teaching until the day arrives when Christ establishes a Church. Our Church, this multitude gathered in the Cathedral, all those who are baptized and who have gathered together today around their altars --- this is the Israel of God, the new people that the Lord planted.

In this Israel that becomes the Church of Christ in the New Testament, there are two elements that would be good to keep in mind: first, the human element, or as we might say, the land in which the vineyard is planted, and secondly, as in every vineyard, the Christian seed or root. The land in which the vineyard is planted is the human person, ourselves, our ancestors, Israel, the descendants of Abraham, all people. God created the world and in this world he has also created the human race with a marvelous capacity that enables the seeds of Christianity to be planted in their hearts.

But before becoming Christian, society must first of all be human. Here it is beautiful to take up the second reading from Saint Paul where he presents us with human values: *finally*,

*my sisters and brothers, whatever is true, whatever is humble, whatever is just, whatever is peace, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things* (3). This is not the time, my sisters and brothers, to live with some dichotomy between those things that were created and those that were redeemed. The very Word of God became flesh to redeem the world and to make the world Christian. The Word of God, before becoming incarnate, is the One through whom all things were made (4). In other words, before planting this vineyard of Christ, God had created human beings with an ability to receive all the divine wisdom that this planted vineyard supposes in humanity.

Certainly in theological terms we make distinctions between nature and grace --- not everything that is true or good is supernatural. But yet everything that is supernatural, all that has to be rewarded with eternity, all that is noble and holy in the human person, has to first of all possess a natural base. In theology we say that grace does not destroy nature but rather grace supposes nature. Therefore a criminal, a liar, a traitor who is not even human --- these persons cannot enter the Kingdom of God unless they first of all convert and above all else become human. Christianity has no place for hypocrisy.

It is beautiful to read the words of the Second Vatican Council that speak about the People of God and make reference to non-Christians, to those who have not been baptized, to this vast world that we call missionary territory, to these lands of non-believers. The Council uses very respectful words: *Whatever good or truth is found among them is considered by the Church to be a preparation for the Gospel and given by him who enlightens all men that they may at length have life* (5). Look at how the beautiful dawn of Christianity is enlightening these people where the missionary goes with the seeds of Christianity and finds that people are prepared to receive the gospel. Remember the beautiful scene when Saint Paul received non-believing people: *What are we to do, my brothers?* (6). Paul feels that this is the voice of the Spirit that cries out from the world of non-believers.

My sisters and brothers, how much truth and goodness there is beyond the Christian frontiers! Let us respect these values because many times we believe that we, because we are part of the Church, are the best in the world. Who knows? Who knows if within the Church we are less good, less noble, less human than those who are outside the Church who wait for some biblical preparation that will give them that true dignity that can only be conferred on them by Christianity? Thus Saint Paul tells us that this fertile land receives whatever is good, noble, pure, lovely, and just (7). My sisters and brothers, none of this should be unappreciated because all of this is a preparation for the gospel. Therefore let us not be fanatics! Fanaticism among Christians has caused much evil. It is like the arrogance of the oldest son who points toward his younger brother and says: *that one is evil; I am good* (8). In fact, the prodigal son was the better because he came back repentant and thus gave greater love to his father than his brother who was conceited from his position of false and hypocritical fidelity.

With truly moving characteristics the latest documents of the Church have defended the roots of Christianity. I still remember Paul VI, this truly marvelous man who said that he was going to love history more than his contemporaries. We did not yet fully understand the great treasure of ecclesiology, especially the ecclesiology that Paul VI has left us. In his first encyclical he asks (9): what does baptism do? Baptism is the moment in which the seeds of Christianity are planted in the hearts of women and men, thus transforming people, as Tertullian says<sup>1</sup>, into the supernatural vineyard of the Lord. Every person is a natural

Christian. There is a seed of nobility in them, but Christianity does not arise from this nature. For this reason we speak of that which is supernatural because it is something above nature, beyond our own grasp. Thus we esteem this solemn moment of Baptism because a child of the flesh, born as the result of a noble, loyal and good marriage, but still a child of the flesh -- through baptism this child becomes a member of God's vineyard. The hand of God plants Christianity, the roots of Christianity, Christ, in the heart of the child who is to be baptized. Paul VI defines this moment of baptism (10) and says that we are dealing with a new life and yet nothing that was human was lost except the unfortunate inheritance of original sin. The newly baptized is now able to give the greatest expression to all that is human and thus experience the richest and purest fruits of this sacrament.

What a beautiful reality! Christianity does not take away anything that is human! Many people believe that the Church comes with subversive ideas, with political or social values, and therefore support the Church only in her human values and forget that hymn of the wise men who came to ask Herod where Christ had been born, where God had planted the root that will spring forth into eternal life for humanity. Herod was envious of this new king and the Church says: *Herod, do not be afraid, the one who is coming to establish an eternal kingdom is not coming to take away any of your temporal power*<sup>2</sup>. This is Christianity that does not enter into rivalry with the powers of the earth but rather gives them an eternal destination. The Church does the same for all those persons who allow the seeds of Christianity to take root in their hearts. Christianity is a seed of new life, a seed for the formation of new men and women, a seed for the formation of new structures. Often democratic structures are in place but people have made a farce of these structures instead of allowing them to revitalize society with the life of God. True Christians will open up channels and ways to express freedom and dignity and thus allows all that is noble and good in the human race and in the society of El Salvador to come to life.

To repress the Church so that she cannot set down her Christian roots is very perverse and ingenious. When in the twilight of his life, Paul VI, with great maturity, wrote about the mission of the Church in the world. In *Evangeliu Nuntiandi* he stated: *For the Church it is a question not only of preaching the Gospel in ever wider geographic areas or to ever greater numbers of people, but also of affecting and as it were upsetting, through the power of the Gospel, mankind's criteria of judgment, determining values, points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life, which are in contrast with the Word of God and the plan of salvation* (11). For this reason he says that *what matters is to evangelize man's culture and cultures not in a purely decorative way as it were by applying a thin veneer, but in a vital way, in depth and right to their very roots* (12). Unfortunately many who want to be in good standing with Christ and with the evil one in the world simply want to evangelize in the decorative way described above. One cannot evangelize those who are still perverse. One cannot call to Baptism those who are rooted in selfishness. To evangelize is to commit oneself, to place at the service of God all those human qualities that through natural generation we inherit from our parents --- that is, all this culture that through inheritance expresses the soul and the sentiment of the country. Christianity is the greatest patriot that there can be.

For this reason Bishop Thiamerto, the bishop of Hungary --- that country that many times has been torn apart by foreign tyrants --- the bishop said that when the National Anthem cannot be sung in public, then within our churches we will sing with the freedom of patriotism the National Anthem of our country. It is here, my sisters and brothers, in the Christian environment of our temples, during our reflection on the Word of God, in the small

groups of the base communities of faith --- it is here where authentic patriotism is proclaimed. To persecute the Church is to destroy the country. To persecute Christianity is suicide.

In light of the Word of God today, what is the fruit of this vineyard that the hand of the Lord planted on our earth? It is an honor and a happy coincidence that on October 12<sup>th</sup> we are going to celebrate El Día de la Raza (the Day of our Race). Let us celebrate this day with an attitude of gratitude for the missionaries who brought the seeds of Christianity to America. There was nobility in our Native Indians. That which was human was very good. Yes, they, the Native Indians, were children of the flesh --- people who carried with them a natural inheritance. Yet without a doubt the missionaries of five centuries ago, like Saint Paul, would have said to the Indians of America: *whatever is noble, whatever is just, pure, lovely, gracious ... keep these things in mind* (13). It is sad that at that time the process of evangelization did not have the same clear ideas as the Church of today. It is sad to reflect on the evil that was done by the alliance with the sword that wanted to impose the cross and the sign of Christianity through military force. This convinces the people of nothing. One does not convince people by imposing a civilization that comes from another part of the world. Rather one holds up all that is noble in the present structure. Thanks to God modern pastoral practices are discovering all that is noble, holy and good in our Native Indians and that still circulates through our veins and demands that the seeds of Christianity be planted in a true and authentic manner in our land.

For this reason the Church desires autonomy to be able to preach what Christ commands her to preach and to not accommodate herself to what others want her to preach. The seed of God comes to plant itself with shoots of eternal life in this natural earth where men and women prepare themselves to receive this seed to the degree that (humbly speaking) they try to make themselves more noble.

Let us not forget, my sisters and brothers, these two elements that make one a good Christian. First, the natural element --- let us cultivate this element. Let us cultivate those virtues of honesty, justice, loyalty --- all those virtues that bring about sincere friendship. Indeed we do not have to be Christian to cultivate these virtues because even non-believers experience the need to cultivate these. There is much good in that which is human. Later, as Christians, we must cultivate the second element. Let us cultivate that which we receive in Baptism, what Christ planted in our hearts, namely, the sacraments and the life of grace. Let us flee from sin and live according to the law of the Lord. Then as Isaiah says the fruits will be there. When God weeps over the failure of his vineyard he announces that: *the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the people of Judah are his cherished plant; he looked for judgment, but see, bloodshed! for justice, but hark, the outcry!* (14). In the second reading, Saint Paul speaks to us about the fruits that we ought to await: the peace of God, virtue, and merit. The God of peace will be with you (15).

My beloved sisters and brothers, in a thousand different ways we have said that we want peace, but not the peace of the cemeteries or a peace based on violence. We do not want a peace that is the result of extortion or imposition, rather we desire a peace that is the fruit of justice and the fruit of obedience to God *who looked for judgment but found bloodshed*. God looked for justice and his vineyard should have produced this fruit. Christians in El Salvador ought to have produced much peace, judgment and justice. How different would our country be if we were producing what God had planted! God, however, feels like a failure with regard to certain societies (I believe that the passages from Isaiah and Saint Paul that we have

proclaimed today have become a sad reality in El Salvador): *he looked for judgment, but see, bloodshed! for justice, but hark, the outcry!* (16).

We are not talking about planting discord but speak about crying out to the God who weeps, crying out to the God who experiences the laments of the people because of so much abuse, crying out to the God who experiences the laments of *campesinos* who are unable to sleep in their homes because during the night they are in flight, crying out to the God who experiences the laments of children who cry out for their parents who have disappeared: *where are they?* This is not what God looked for! The way in which we in El Salvador are living does not reflect the seeds of humanism and Christianity that have been planted in our midst.

### **This vineyard which is the Church reflects the crises of God's Kingdom.**

The seed of Christ appears to be frustrated and if this is not so, then thanks be to God, for as we are going to see there is much good here in El Salvador. But first I want to focus on my second thought. God planted a vineyard and this vineyard is his Church. In this Church, as a place of encounter between God and men and women and as a place of encounter between earth that is prepared by men and women and the seed that God plants, there is reflected the enormous cross of the Kingdom of God.

I want to remind you that during this whole year the gospel reading on Sunday has been taken from the book of Saint Matthew and I have explained the outline of this gospel to you. According to Biblical commentators this is the best organized gospel and presents the great news that Christ brought to the world: the Kingdom of God has come to men and women. We find ourselves in the final section of this gospel. The entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem has been narrated and this section of the gospel describes the moment of crisis in which Christ confronts the priests, the Pharisees, and the great leaders of Jerusalem ... this moment of crisis that is going to be a turning point in history. At this moment in the gospel of Matthew, the Kingdom of God is in crisis. The parables of Jesus reflect this crisis. Today's parable is tremendous! The very leaders of Israel that are mentioned in the gospel --- the high priest, the senators (translated into today's language we might say the bishop, the government ministers, government officials, the priests, the leaders of the people, the catechists, those who have money) --- Jesus confronts these people and is in conflict with them and tells them the parable of the vineyard.

A man ordered a vineyard to be planted and he rented out the land. At harvest time he commanded the produce to be brought in. History tells us that in Jesus' time there were also disputes between the owner and the workers. We might call this a labor conflict ... but the conflict was so terrible that they killed those who had been sent by the owner and eventually they killed the owner's son (who represented Jesus). Then like an echo of the prophet Isaiah, Jesus says: *judge between me and my vineyard: what more was there to do for my vineyard that I have not done? When I looked for the crop of grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes ... these sour grapes that no one eats ... So much work to come to this?* (17). When the vineyard produced fruit, a conflict was created. The workers did not want to give the owner of the vineyard the fruit and they killed those whom the owner had sent (here Jesus is referring to the prophets who were sent by God to the people, the prophets who were disturbed by the injustices of the people). This is the crisis. This is the crisis that the gospel has to confront throughout history. God plants a vineyard and waits for the fruit and yet gathers in no fruit but only criminal actions and assassinations which the Lord did not plant. Again God plants

a vineyard and waits for the fruit but gathers in no fruit except the injustice of those who kill and trample on his prophets, on those whom he sent to the people.

Saint Paul, a Jew but above all a Christian, in his letter to the Romans analyzes this situation --- and here several Sundays ago we had the opportunity to study this point. Saint Paul reflects on this crisis and says that he has been sent to the Gentiles because the Jews, the Israel where God planted his vineyard, had become unworthy and no longer wanted to obey God. They preferred the Law of Moses over faith in Christ. Therefore, as Christians, we go to the Gentiles because we know that Moses and his laws and the Old Testament have passed away and all that remains is the One who has returned in Christ. Saint Paul says that he preaches to the Gentiles because they accept this teaching, the same teaching that provoked jealousy in the Jews (18). While the Gentiles are converted to Christ, the Jews are attracted to another god, but God will forgive them. Paul uses a beautiful phrase in the letter to the Romans, a phrase that should prevent anyone from becoming so proud that they would believe that the seed of Christianity is the product of their merits. Saint Paul says: *Just as you once disobeyed God but have now received mercy because of their disobedience, so they have now disobeyed in order that, by virtue of the mercy shown to you, they too may now receive mercy. For God delivered all to disobedience, that he might have mercy upon all* (19). This is the plan of God and therefore people should experience themselves as sinners. The Jews were the chosen people, the land where God planted his vineyard. But they rejected this vineyard and so the vineyard was extended to the Gentiles. We are the Gentiles and we have accepted this vineyard. Blessed be God! and what do the people, who fill this cathedral, say? A vineyard with branches filled with hope. When the Jewish people reflect on the greatness that they have rejected, they will become converted to Christ. Thus as our sins as Gentiles have been forgiven and the seeds of Christianity have become more firmly rooted in our hearts, so too the Lord will forgive the Jews and also plant the seeds of Christianity in their hearts. Therefore, my sisters and brothers, the plan of God involves us in these crises of the Church's history.

The Church in El Salvador is now involved in a crisis. There are divisions in our Church and we cannot deny that fact. There are those who reject the pastoral guidelines of the Archbishop. There are many people who criticize the doctrine that we are proclaiming and feel that all of this is perverse. In the midst of this situation of division which is very dangerous, my sisters and brothers, there are those who prefer to remain in the state of rebelliousness of the Jews and the state of disobedience of the Gentiles. They prefer that situation rather than embrace the humility that they need --- they have become arrogant because of their favored position in God's eyes. They prefer their situation of disobedience and adore false gods rather than accept the seed of Christianity that leads them to worship the true God whom our Lord Jesus Christ revealed.

If at this moment, my dear sisters and brothers, Christians in El Salvador do not feel the crisis that is in each Christian's heart, then they have not reflected on the meaning of God's message and of his harvest in the world. Many have already weathered the crisis and have committed themselves to God's kingdom. Many have weathered it in the opposite sense: they have settled down in their advantages and found it easier to say that the Church is communist and therefore why follow this Church. But some indeed are in crisis; they do not know what to do. The blame is not God's or the Church's. Each one's free conscience must decide with whom to stand. God, our Lord, is offering wonderful harvests to those who allow this vine to be planted --- a marvelous yield, the fruit of eternal life. This is God's plan.

The Church is the vineyard where God's kingdom is ever in crisis. Blessed are those who feel and live the crisis and who settle it with a commitment to the Lord. I am very glad that just at this moment of crisis many who were asleep have awakened and at least ask themselves where the truth is to be found. Look for it! Saint Paul shows us the way: with prayer, with reflection, appreciating what is good. These are wonderful criteria. Wherever there is *what is noble, what is good, what is right* (20), there is God. If besides these natural good things, there is found grace, holiness, sacraments, the joy of a conscience divinized by God, there is God. God is not found in those other places that give one a sense of false peace and false victory.

Therefore my beloved sisters and brothers, in light of the vineyard that is in crisis and before concluding with my third point which is very brief [an invitation to participate in the Eucharist where Jesus says *I am the vine you are the branches* (21), I want now to invite you to live with the Church the intensity of her community, her faith and her hope.

### **Life of the Church**

During the past week who has not felt the effects of the prayers that we have offered for the eternal rest of John Paul I? In Rome and here in our cathedral, the people have prayed for the Holy Father. Next Saturday the cardinals will gather together to elect the new Pope. This should be a week of intense prayer for us.

While speaking about the Pontiff, I want to thank the pastor of the Emmanuel Baptist Church who sent me a letter. I want to highlight the following rich, Christian concepts of his letter: *The significance of the life and the testimony of the last two Pontiffs whose passing through history has left an unforgettable mark on us as ministers and priests. In time marked out by hours and days, the Popes have maintained a vision of that which is eternal and that which is the foundation of God's justice. The pastor added: I am thankful that we are in agreement about the present crisis. It appears to me to be an hour of great temptation in which those who distort Christianity with the power of the kingdoms of this world and demand that they be worshipped are struggling with those who are faithful to the gospel and those who are generous and gracious in the face of humiliations that culminate in the cross. These people find strength and power in the resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Many thanks my beloved brother Carlos for this ecumenical gesture that is so profoundly Christian.*

The Church lives and is that vineyard that God has planted in our Archdiocese. I have experienced this up close. Last Sunday in the parish of Ayutuxtepeque we celebrated the tenth anniversary of the ordination of Father Samuel Orellana. What joy and so many young people in that community!

Also last Sunday, the Carmelite missionaries celebrated in Plan de Pino the twenty-fifth anniversary of their arrival in El Salvador. They prepared a beautiful confirmation ceremony and we had a dialogue with the groups who expressed the fact that their lively community is indeed the vineyard of the Lord.

On Monday, the second of October, Opus Dei, whose patronal feast is celebrated on the feast of the angels, commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of their foundation. The Church rejoices with every effort of sanctification in the world and at this time of the Church's crisis, desires that people not only live a personal and individual holiness but also strive for that

communitarian holiness that gives witness to the light of the world. As Cardinal Pironio said when he responded to a question concerning the authenticity of Christian and religious life: *there are three criteria: great love for Christ, great fidelity to the charism of the founders, and a great adaptability to the pastoral guidelines of the local church.*

I want to emphasize this third element because many religious communities have demonstrated their ability to adapt to the pastoral guidelines of the Archdiocese. In the parish of Concepción in Villa de San Francisco, the Franciscan community is providing a true service to the world as they minister in this community that is located in a very difficult area of the capital. We celebrated with them on the feast of Saint Francis Assisi. We also celebrated with the Oblate Sisters of Divine Love in San Francisco Lempa where they are helping and promoting a very devout community. I want to congratulate these Sisters and Father Benito Alfaro who was slandered this week in the newspapers and accused of collaborating with the guerillas<sup>3</sup>. Father Alfaro is a humble priest and a fierce defender of the religious Sisters of the Sacred Heart whom politicians wanted to manipulate in Dulce Nombre de María. The slanderous statements about Fr. Alfaro are rooted in this fact. I want to tell you that the accusations against Fr. Alfaro are lies and slander.

On Saturday, October 7<sup>th</sup>, we celebrated the feast of the Holy Rosary. We united ourselves with the joy of the Dominican Community and with the members of those parishes that bear the name of the Holy Rosary. We encourage everyone to pray the rosary as an expression of the life of the Christian communities and families.

Tonight at 7:00pm we invite the Catholic community of Santa Tecla to participate in a Mass in the Church of El Calvario where we are going to express our solidarity with the pastoral work of the new pastor, Father Francisco Javier Aguilar. We hope to see you all there at 7:00pm in the church of El Calvario.

In Soyapango the community is celebrating the feast of our Lady of the Rosary and it is very comforting to see how the Virgin is an expression of the life of our Christian communities.

This Church, the vineyard of the Lord that has been planted in our country is saddened this week because of the capture of two priests and some lay collaborators. Father David Rodríguez together with Dr. Guillermo Joaquín Cuéllar was arrested by the National Police and Father Trinidad Jesús Nieto was captured by the National Guard. We ask: what do people hope to achieve with these attitudes? Judging from the very respectful treatment of Father David and the clever interrogation concerning our radio station, it appears that there is an attempt to manipulate the hierarchy because Bishop Aparecio was called and given a report concerning the radio station. Are they trying to manipulate this situation so that instead of having our radio station closed by the government, the hierarchy closes it? This would be very sad, but we ask that those who do not want this voice to be heard, please have the courage to tell us this, for God desires this voice to continue to speak out. This radio station is a very small expression of the Church's freedom to speak. If these people have all the means of communication at their disposal, why are they disturbed by our radio station and newspaper? Justice is our power and the truth is what gives greatness to our means of communication. For this reason they are feared by these people.

The National Commission of Justice and Peace in El Salvador has published an interesting pamphlet with facts concerning the events that are taking place in Nicaragua. The



statements, made by eyewitnesses of these events, are horrifying. We hope that the Human Rights Commission and the mediators in this conflict do not cover up these facts but rather make us hear the cries of the people of Nicaragua. We have sent a modest donation of 4,000 colones --- money donated by the people of the Archdiocese. We will continue to take up this collection to help our sisters and brothers. This is a small amount of money in comparison to the many needs of these people, but a little is something especially when it is inspired by love.

A beautiful gesture that we might call part of the harvest of the vineyard was offered to me by the students of the Escuela San José. They shared with me the best works of the semester --- works entitled *The Church in my country*. I congratulate those students and the school for the sense of Church that they are planting.

### **Events of the week**

My sisters and brothers, the Church, the Kingdom of God, cannot leave aside those human realities of the earth that she must speak about. I have already spoken about the problem at the University. They are trying to reinitiate classes there but there is still fear. The Faculty of Economics has already stated that they will not offer classes. At the same time the government has stated that the watchmen at the University do not depend on the Security Forces. I encourage the clarification of this situation that demands the presence of armed forces on the property of this cultural center, especially when these forces have shown the violence that they are capable of when they feel that they are autonomous.

I have received a thank you note from the wife of Doctor Carlos Alberto Rodriguez, the dean of the Faculty of Economics who was assassinated. She thanked the Church for the prayers and for her voice in denouncing these injustices and abuses. I also received a letter from another woman who is afflicted. Doña Carmen de Castro, the wife of Major and Doctor Alfonso Castro Sam who disappeared mysteriously, asked me in her very moving letter to speak to you, especially those of you who are listening to me on radio and who might be able to shed some light on this situation of darkness. This woman says: *I and my children have faith and await the safe return of my husband. If someone has information about him I would be grateful for this news. I am also grateful to you, bishop, for all that you are able to say and do for this family that is now suffering.* The Church identifies with human suffering wherever it is found and so we ask for your understanding and whatever help you can give us in this matter.

On the Day of Children some very moving letters arrived at my office and I would simply like to share with you some of the thoughts of these *campesino* children: *we want to pray that God will intercede on behalf of the political prisoners. How many mothers and fathers are absent from their homes because they are jailed or have disappeared?* In a letter from children in another school, they said: *We would be very grateful if you would do us the favor of making the following denunciation. The National Guard has taken our teacher away. Our teacher is very good and he is not involved in politics. We do not know where they have taken him nor do we know where he is being held --- they did not even give him time to close the school. We want to conclude our classes and we are students in the first and second grade.* Isaiah refers to this as *the cry that awaits justice and yet nothing comes but cries* (22).

I want to communicate to you some other news that fills me with hope. I received a letter from several lawyers who have organized themselves in the School of Legal Professional

Services. They expressed their condolences on the occasion of the death of the Pope and their solidarity with the Church. This is most beautiful and it is good to know that not everyone is insensitive. My sisters and brothers, the insensitivity that is being shown concerns me. Villages and homes are searched; people are abused and others disappear and it seems that this is becoming a normal occurrence. Hopefully the sensitivity of some lawyers who have organized themselves and with power are able to confront others and demand justice --- hopefully this will awaken the conscience of other citizens to the freedom that our people demand. Several lawyers have expressed their opinion in the newspapers<sup>4</sup> and stated that the Supreme Court and the Criminal Court allow the dishonesty of judges to continue. In response the Secretary General has asked the newspapers for the names of these lawyers in order to ask for their collaboration. Hopefully these words of the Secretary General do not become just a cheap excuse: *tell me the names!* He certainly knows who these judges are!

In this atmosphere of Church we once again express our condolences to Mrs Matsumoto and her children. The body of her husband who mysteriously disappeared has been found<sup>5</sup>. I have been informed that this discovery was done with much "show". I do not know this for certain but it seems very sarcastic to put on a show over the discovery of a body. What is certain is that her husband's body has been found, and according to Japanese tradition, his ashes have been placed in an urn and will be brought back to his homeland. We are saddened by the memories that this family will have of our country, yet they have praised us and said: *I want to express to you my great satisfaction for the sense of hospitality and friendship of the people of El Salvador.* Mrs. Matsumoto and her family have never been alone but morally supported by many good friends in our country. I want to praise the Japanese people in our country for their display of unity during a time of great sorrow for this family that has been tormented.

We also want to express our solidarity with the petition of those people living on the Hacienda El Rosario near Metapán. They have asked the government not to displace them from this area but to find a place where they can be relocated. We also have the same concern that was expressed by some teachers in the newspapers<sup>6</sup>, namely, the problem of alcoholism among teachers. Hopefully AA, which I have previously mentioned here, will extend their saving arms. My sisters and brothers as I congratulate AA at this time, I also ask them to help save the people of our country and extend life boats to so many of our people who are drowning in the seas of alcoholism.

### **The victory will be Christ's through his Church**

I do not want to extend this homily too much longer. Forgive me for I have said enough and want to conclude this homily with one final point --- an invitation to participate in the Eucharist. In the first part of this homily we said that God planted a vineyard, his Church, in the world. We then said that this vineyard reflects the crisis of the Kingdom of God and humanity. Thus to conclude I wish to share my final thought, namely, that Christ will be victorious.

Jesus says: *I am the vine... whoever remains in me and I in them him will bear much fruit* (23). This is a call and an affirmation of God's desire that the vineyard produce much fruit. Let us make sure that these seeds that were planted in our hearts at the time of our baptism produce not only those natural virtues that are so much a part of the people of El Salvador. We have already said that these natural virtues are good and glorious, but they are not enough. Let us sow those seeds of eternal life, faith, prayer, our Sunday celebration, the sacraments and all of those things that elevate our hearts to transcendent realities --- all those

things that in the midst of the present crisis and difficulties of injustice and abuse on this earth enable us to await the great hope that has not been lost by everyone because the seed of God is well rooted in our land. So be it. (applause).

---

<sup>1</sup> Tertulian, *Apologeticum*, 17, 6: PL. 1, 377.

<sup>2</sup> *Liturgy of the Hours*, Hymn for Vespers on the feast of the Epiphany.

<sup>3</sup> See *El Mundo*, 6 October 1978.

<sup>4</sup> See *El Diario de Hoy*, 4 October 1978.

<sup>5</sup> See *La Prensa Gráfica*, 5 October 1978.

<sup>6</sup> See *El Diario de Hoy*, 6 October 1978.

*Marginal References* (1) Is 5,1: (2) Ps 80,9: (3) Ph 4,8: (4) Jn 1,3: (5) LG 16: (6) Ac 16,9-10: (7) Ph 4,8: (8) Lk 15,25-30: (9) ES 18: (10) ES 18: (11) EN 19: (12) EN 20: (13) Ph 4,8: (14) Is 5,7: (15) Ph 4,9: (16) Is 5,7: (17) Is 5,3-4: (18) Rm 11,13-14: (19) Rm 11,30-32: (20) Ph 4,6: (21) Jn 15,5: (22) Is 5,7: (23) Jn 15,5.