

GOD'S FEAST WITH HUMANITY

Twenty-eighth Sunday of Ordinary Time
October 15, 1978

Isaiah 25:6-10a

Philippians 4:12-14, 19-20

Matthew 22:1-14

As I begin this homily I want to communicate to you, through my modest service of the Word, all the joy and optimism that the Liturgy of the Word wants to give us during this Sunday celebration --- a Sunday that we could characterize as God's feast with women and men. Therefore, I give the following title to today's homily: God's feast with humanity.

In order to understand all of this, however, I want to situate us in the proper environment so that we can receive this message. I want to remind you that the fundamental line of thought that the Word of God is presenting to us throughout this year of 1978 is based on the gospel of Saint Matthew of which we have distributed an outline. In seven stages, this gospel proclaims the same great news that the Church announces to the world: the Kingdom of God has come. We are taken back to the origins of this Kingdom as we reflect in the same way as the primitive communities.

When we read the gospel of Saint Matthew we are reminded that the gospels are the result of the profound and devout reflection of these communities. The gospels were not written immediately after Jesus ascended into heaven but rather the apostles preached the events that they had lived and reflected upon. Therefore, the parables not only reflect Jesus' thinking but also summarize the concerns of the early Church. In the section of the gospel that we commented on last Sunday, chapters 19-25, we saw that we are dealing with the sixth phase of Saint Matthew's gospel. This section refers to the crisis that prepared the definitive coming of the Kingdom of God --- a crisis that arose from the growing opposition of the Jewish leaders, a crisis that was announced by the Divine Teacher and a crisis that will be ultimately crowned with the eschatological dialogue. In other words, Jesus has entered into Jerusalem and these events take place on the eve of his death. This is a definitive conflict in which Jesus wishes to demonstrate clearly with his words that the Kingdom of God should not be opposed. Because of the arrogant opposition of the Jewish leaders, Jesus is going to take the Kingdom away from them and give it to the Gentiles. He is warning them and telling them that there is still time and therefore they should open themselves to the reality of conversion. What a great responsibility is placed upon the leaders of the people --- a responsibility that is given to them precisely because they guide the people.

Therefore, my sisters and brothers, I want my words to be understood in the same way that the gospel situates them. The Word must always clash and cannot please everyone. There were, and will continue to be, people who reject the Word and Jesus has given us this example. Those who rejected the Word were the leaders who blamed Jesus for distorting the history of Israel. Yet Jesus did not distort this history but rather oriented it toward its true

destiny. The Jewish leaders were the ones who actually distorted history. It is necessary to place ourselves in the situation in order to understand the real language of the Church. Her language is not political or subversive and she is not looking for rebellion. The Church proclaims a language of love and says to people: *this is the path on which you should walk*. To those persons who are walking in a different direction she says: *this is simply a distortion of the true path on which you should be walking*.

We should also note that we are concluding the Liturgical Year. At the end of November, the beginning of December, we will begin another Liturgical Year with the celebration of the first Sunday of Advent. At this time we should place ourselves in the situation of those students who are celebrating the results of their examinations, those students who are graduating and/or advancing to a higher level in their studies. Hopefully these last days of the Liturgical Year are marked by the same concern of those students who prepare for their examinations. They stay awake for many hours in order to prepare for their exams and their graduation. Much more important is it for us to obtain our degree during the passing of the Liturgical Year. Someone used a very flattering comparison in telling me: *Your Sunday homilies are like a university course*. I have never intended anything like that, but desire only to be an ordinary catechist, an evangelizer of the people --- nothing else. But certainly, more important than all the chairs of all the sciences of the human race is the simple chair of evangelization which teaches people the true meaning of life, their genuine relationship with God, and their responsibilities in society. This is what we have tried to do. It is for this reason that I advise you that we are concluding the Liturgical Year with these final reflections on the gospel of Saint Matthew and we will soon begin another year. In other words, we will soon begin another course, with another gospel, but the teacher is the same, Jesus Christ.

We can now understand that the gospel this week is not the same as that of previous weeks or the same as that which will be proclaimed in weeks to come. Yes, the gospel is the same but the historical framework in which we reflect upon the gospel is different. The community in which Saint Matthew reflected in order to write his gospel is different from the concrete framework of the community gathered here in the Cathedral and distinct from the situation of those communities that are reflecting on this message and listening to us on their radios. My sisters and brothers, even though more than anyone else I am disturbed by the fact that I become like a reporter on the events that take place during the week, but I have become accustomed to this because it is important to point out the simple, flourishing and devout life of our Church. At the same time it is equally important to point out those situations of opposition and persecution and misunderstanding that surround this community against these desires to live and guide themselves according to the ways of Jesus.

Life of the Church

During this week we could define the Church with some very pleasing characteristics. Next Thursday a group of priests who are actively working in our Archdiocese are going to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of their ordination: Father Carlos Mejía, the pastor of Flor Blanca; Father Roberto Crespín, in Ciudad Delgado; Father Benjamín Rodríguez in Jayaque; Father Modesto Villarán in Soyapango. A few days after this celebration, on October 25th, Father Roberto Amilcar Torruella and Father Sergio Moreno will celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of their ordination.

Within this context of speaking about our priests, direct collaborators in our ministry, we have to affirm the defense of Father Benito Alfaro that appeared in the bulletin of the

Archdiocese. This defense of Father Alfaro appeared with official testimony from the Mayor, a judge and many parishioners from the parish¹. In the same bulletin appeared a clarification of the events surrounding the unjust capture of Father David Rodríguez, Father Trinidad Nieto, and Dr. Guillermo Cuéllar².

Within this framework of our life as Church and as a community that has gathered together to reflect on the Word of God, today we are also celebrating the feast of Saint Theresa of the Child Jesus. This Spanish religious woman knew how to apply the spirit of Carmel to the modern era. We see this here in El Salvador in the magnificent example of the Carmelite Community who minister in the parish of Colonia Roma and the Carmelite Sisters of Saint Joseph who minister in the Colegio Belén, a center of promotion in Colonia Utilia in the Department of Santa Tecla, as well as in several other pastoral centers such as Ciudad Barrios, Apulo, etc. The same is seen in the example of the Carmelite Sisters of Saint Theresa who minister in the Colegio Santa Teresa where I had the opportunity to celebrate Mass with them and share their Carmelite spirituality. I also mention here the work that the Sisters are doing in the Hospital de la Divina Providencia and the pastoral ministry in San Ramón where they provide a wonderful service to our society. This same kind of work is being done in many other centers. Twenty-five years ago the Carmelite Sisters came from Spain and have worked among us in the Policlínica Salvadoreña and with the people in Plan de Pino and Laguna de Chalatenango.

In this same line of thought I want to communicate to you the joyful news of a meeting of all the Assumption Sisters who are working in El Salvador. The purpose of this meeting is to deepen their knowledge so that they can better place the charism of their founder at the service of our people. Indeed this is the meaning of religious life that involves men and women who have been called by God to receive a spiritual experience that is referred to as a charism. But this charism is not just for them but rather is intended to be shared with the Church in service of the People of God.

It was also the community, the Church that offered me a wonderful experience this week in El Calvario in the Department of Santa Tecla. This occurred last Sunday evening --- what devotion and what joy in that environment of celebration!

In the community of Soyapango, the base communities of faith came together in a beautiful and devout gathering in honor of our Lady of the Rosary.

In the village of La Loma in San Pedro Perulapán we noticed that the people were very timid and yet very courageously participated in the Mass that was celebrated there for two *campesinos* who were assassinated. Their death and their appearance on the road to Apulo remain a mystery. Why so timid? Why so fearful? I saw this close up. A group of men from ORDEN approached our Eucharistic celebration with machetes in their hands in a threatening posture of authority --- as if they had no confidence in the bishop or the priests and the sisters who were there with the faithful men and women of this area. I want to tell you, my dear sisters and brothers, that authority is for service and should not be used to terrorize or threaten others.

I also want to thank and greet a group of laity who met in Soyapango to reflect on my Pastoral Letter. The thinking of the Archdiocese concerning the popular organizations is defined in this Letter and therefore is binding on the Archdiocese. The bishop in each diocese is responsible for the magisterium and ecclesiastical discipline. Therefore I say to all

the priests, sisters and laity that in the matter of popular organizations the authentic doctrine of the Church of our Archdiocese has been presented to you by the Archbishop and you should abide by this teaching. As long as the Holy See does not say otherwise then this is the teaching of the bishop responsible for the magisterium in the Archdiocese of San Salvador. Each bishop in his diocese is a teacher and spiritual leader.

From Apopa we have received the complaint that Caritas has not been allowed to provide assistance in some villages. We remind you that Caritas is the Church's extended hand that reaches out in charity. We want to make this an organization of true service and therefore ask for your help. Please do not continue to hinder us in this way.

On the other hand, the Archdiocesan community rejoices during these days of beautiful and very significant celebrations as the school year comes to an end. Our Catholic primary and secondary schools are gathering in the harvest of this pastoral work in our schools. Hopefully at the conclusion of the academic year all of our Catholic schools can experience the joy of not only being an official school where teaching has taken place but can also experience themselves as being a voice in the evangelization process. Our schools value the official educational program and as true citizens we must respect this program, but the spirit that animates the teaching in Catholic schools has to be in harmony with the Bishop who is responsible for the life of the Church. The primary and secondary Catholic schools pertain to the life of the Church or else they are not Catholic.

I also rejoice with you, my sisters and brothers who have gathered here in the Cathedral because our celebration has been the object of international reporting. Perhaps you did not notice that on September 24th, the feast of Our Lady of Mercy, a reporter from the Associated Press was with us and described our celebration in an article that was published abroad. It was not published here because he referred to the sad situation of the presence of armed men in the park in front of the Cathedral.

Also in another recent Sunday celebration we had honor of having our Mass filmed by a Dutch television station. Later in the evening they also filmed the Mass in El Calvario in Santa Tecla. They were very pleased with the celebration in the Cathedral and experienced the lively participation of the people who come here to celebrate the Eucharist. They experienced the profound silence and prayer and the close attention that people give to the Word of God. I want to thank my beloved sisters and brothers who fill the Cathedral because your presence and your example encourages me as your Pastor. Indeed you provide an example not only to this diocese, but as I have just said, your example reaches beyond the frontiers of this country.

I also want to bring before you a personal remembrance and so forgive me but today we celebrate the seventh anniversary of the death of a great friend from San Miguel, Don César Augusto Osegueda who through the publication of his newspaper *El Diario de Oriente*, continually struggled on behalf of the cause of the respect of human rights and we are greatly indebted to him for his work.

I also want to thank an elderly infirm woman from San Ramón who in a beautiful letter spoke about her former work with the Church and now offers the Church her illness and good will. I told her that this present offering of hers was the best offering she could make. I say the same to all of you, my sisters and brothers who are ill and/or elderly and unable to be physically present with us: *you are the Church's treasure*. Pope John Paul I has said the

same thing about you³ and so again I thank all of our beloved sisters and brothers who are ill and who give an apostolic meaning to their illness, their incapacity, their aches and their advanced years and offer up all of this for the glory of God. The woman whom I referred to is Adela Morataya, the widow of Hernández. I would hope that many others would imitate this woman and offer to the Lord the treasure of their personal merits.

This is the situation of our Church and this is the Church that is reflecting on the Word of the Lord this morning. With this Word we illuminate the realities that are opposed to the Church and create a crisis for the spread of this Kingdom of God. I am going to speak about this in a few moments. I would like to present to you three ideas that are based on the readings of God's Word and that revolve around the central idea of today's homily: God's feast for women and men. My first idea is that God prepares a feast for women and men; secondly, God makes the Church the messenger of his feast with women and men; thirdly, all people are invited to participate in this feast but not everyone is worthy of the invitation.

God prepares a feast for mankind

God prepares a feast that is motivated by the celebration of the wedding of his Son. Saint Matthew and the first Christians reflected on the mystery of the redemption of humanity and the mystery of the incarnation in a most beautiful way. The act of redemption is God's initiative who wishes to save women and men who have fallen into sin. God wants to make sinful humanity the spouse of his Son. The moment when the Word became flesh in the womb of Mary was the moment when God became wedded to humanity. Our catechism tells us that the fruit of Mary's virginal womb is a representation of humanity. God created a human body and infused into that body a human soul but the human person who became incarnated in that body and soul was the person of God. Each one of us, when we were conceived in the womb of our mothers, was given these three elements: body, soul and person. Our person, however, is not divine and this is the great difference between us and the fruit of Mary's womb. With regards to body and soul Jesus did not have a body that was distinct from ours but was a human person like all of us. But this body of Jesus was assumed by a divine person and therefore this man was also God because the person of God sustained all the spiritual and corporal acts of Jesus. This is what theologians refer to as the hypostatic union, a Greek word which means personal. Hypostatic means person thus this union of the human and divine in the person of the Word.

This is the marvelous union of human nature. The body and soul of a man is united with the divine nature in the person of the Word. As we have reflected on the gospel we have been reminded of the mystery of the incarnation. Therefore, all of you who are married --- you who have committed yourselves to one another in this sacrament of matrimony --- remember that you present to the world an image of this union between God and humankind, between God and his Church. When Saint Paul spoke to those who had contracted matrimony he said that this is a great mystery and he referred to the marriage between Christ and the Church, redeemed humanity that prolongs this body and soul that was formed in the womb of Mary (1). This Jesus then becomes incarnated in all people through the sacrament of Baptism and thus we become the Church. All who have been baptized are by nature united to Christ and thus those who are joined together in matrimony represent this mysterious union.

Ah! If only those who received this sacrament of matrimony understood the greatness of the love between husband and wife then they could also understand the love that Christ has

for his Church and the love that redeemed humanity should have for their Redeemer. If only this were understood by those persons who are living together, that is, those living together without the sacrament, those who have not given a divine meaning to their love. This is the great difference between those who have had their union blessed by the Church and those who are living in concubinage where two people have joined themselves together to establish a family but have not received the blessing of the sacrament and have not given their love the meaning of this mysterious union with Christ and with redeemed humanity.

When one encounters people who are joined together in Christian matrimony, one discovers in the love and faith of the husband the infinite love of Christ for the Church. One also discovers in the love and faith of the wife the faithful love of all of you, my beloved sisters and brothers, who form this Church. Look at the treasures of holiness! I spoke before about the elderly woman who offered her fragile life to God and the religious sisters who consecrated themselves in the Lord's spirit and the priests who celebrated twenty-five years of priestly life during which time they handed themselves over to the Lord. All of this is the Church --- a love of the Church. The martyr who gives his/her life to the Lord, the catechist who is not concerned about persecution but is willing to die for Christ if that is necessary --- all of this is the love of a spouse, a love of the Church.

This is the feast that the Lord is celebrating with women and men. To represent this feast more graphically the prophets announced this feast with images --- poetic images such as those used by the prophet Isaiah: *On that mountain the Lord of hosts will provide for all peoples --- look at the incarnation extended to all people --- a feast of rich food and choice wines, juicy, rich food and pure, choice wines* (2). These are material images that express what we as redeemed Christians have in our Church: the grace of God, charisms, the treasure of God's forgiveness, the joy of a serene conscience and the vocation of faithful following Jesus. All of this is superior to rich food and choice wines. Does it not appear to you, my sisters and brothers, that even though we do not serve wine and rich food, yet when we leave the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist here in the Cathedral, we leave as though we have participated in the banquet of a king? And more than a king! We have been with God and those who have been prepared draw near to receive the heavenly bread. In this banquet of the King we celebrated the marriage of his Son. How beautiful is Communion! How wonderful is the Eucharist!

The same prophet reminds us that these material images provide a spiritual meaning to this feast of God. Look at the beautiful expressions! *On this mountain he will destroy the veil that veils all peoples. The web that is woven over all nations; he will destroy death forever. The Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces; the reproach of his people he will remove from the whole earth* (3). Let us sing a song of hope and be filled with a cheerful spirit, knowing that this Christian life, which came to us with Christ through the Virgin Mary and takes on flesh in all believers, is the presence of God, who makes us a promise: No, sisters and brothers, El Salvador need not always live like this. *I will tear off the veil of shame that covers all peoples. I will wipe away the tears* of all those mothers who no longer have tears because they have wept so much over their children who are not found. Here too the Lord will take away the sorrow of all those homes that this Sunday suffer the mystery of loved ones abducted or murdered or tortured or tormented. None of this is of God. God's banquet will come! Wait for the Lord's hour! Let us have faith that all of this will pass away like a national nightmare and we shall awake to the Lord's great feast! Let us be filled with this hope!

Thus the Church is this mountain that Isaiah refers to. Mount Zion is the place where the Temple of Jerusalem was built, the symbolic place of the encounter of God with his people, the place where God enters into a marriage relationship with women and men, a place where God establishes a covenant, an alliance with people. This is the meaning of matrimony. To those who cannot understand how the love of God for humanity can be compared to matrimony, I would simply say, it is a covenant, an alliance. Like the boyfriend who asks his girlfriend: *are you able to marry me and live with me for the rest of your life?* As the two then kneel before the altar, they enter into a covenant that God ratifies. *What God has joined together, no human being must separate* (4). In this same way God was united to his holy mountain --- a symbol of his love for the chosen people of Israel.

God makes the Church the messenger of his feast for humanity

As a result --- and now I am explaining my second thought --- this mountain, this Church is the messenger of God's feast. The Church inherited all the beauty of Mount Zion and all the promises that God made to Abraham and to the people of Israel. In Jesus Christ this rich inheritance was passed on to the Christian people. Thus this Christian people has the sign of the Church and the holy mountain.

Today the attention of the world is directed toward Mount Zion. As you know --- perhaps you heard it on the Voice of America --- that early this morning it was announced from Rome that black smoke was emitted from the chimney of the Sistine Chapel at noon. Remember that Rome is seven hours ahead of our time. We do not have a new Pope but the eyes of the whole world are focused on that chimney. As soon as white smoke is seen there will be great joy throughout the world. A cardinal will appear on the balcony of Mount Zion and proclaim to the world: *I announce the good news! We have a Pope!* He will then announce the name of the cardinal and the name that the cardinal has chosen as Pope.

My beloved sisters and brothers, this is beautiful, but the Church is more than the Vatican. There in the Vatican we have the most complete expression of the Church in the person of the Supreme Pastor, but around the world this beautiful feast is prepared to be celebrated with everyone because the Church has spread abroad as the messenger of God's feast. As I said before, the bishops are responsible for their dioceses. If there are Episcopal organizations then these have an ecclesiastical character --- but even in this case, the bishop is responsible before God for the ministry in his diocese. Only the Pope has greater responsibility than the bishop. The Pope and the bishops in their dioceses are the messengers who point the way to this feast. My sisters and brothers, I am grateful for the multiple proofs of solidarity that you have shown to your pastor because you do not follow me but rather you are traveling to this feast of our Lord.

How can we explain this feast in the Church? I point out the following text of Vatican II so that we might reflect on it this morning: *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* (5).. This is the first treasure that the Church possesses: the Spirit of Christ resides in those who accept the totality of her organization. The Church is a society that is organized hierarchically and the bishop is responsible in his diocese. Naturally the bishop must be in communion with the Pope and hold himself accountable to the Pontiff. Those lay people who ignore the local bishop and believe in the Episcopal conference and the Pope have not accepted the whole organization of the Church and therefore have not accepted all the means of salvation that have been established in the Church (6). Here is another richness of the feast. That which we are now celebrating: the Eucharist, communion, the

forgiveness of sins in confession, the baptism of children, the blessing of marriages, the ordination of priests, institutes where men and women live their lives consecrated to the Lord --- all of these are means of salvation that have been established in the Church, in the visible body that is united to Christ. This Christ rules the Church through the ministry of the Supreme Pontiff and the bishops, as well as through the bond of the profession of faith, the sacraments, the government of the Church and ecclesiastical communion. In this brief statement of Vatican II we find the beautiful prophecy of Isaiah translated into the language of the Church, the language of Vatican II. The banquet of God on Mount Zion to which all people are called was entrusted to this organization, to this institution called Church. Indeed, it was for this reason that Christ instituted the Church.

You will then ask me: *how can there be salvation outside the Church?* The same Council states: *the Church, now sojourning on earth as an exile, is necessary for salvation. Christ, present to us in His Body, which is the Church, is the one Mediator and the unique way of salvation. In explicit terms He Himself affirmed the necessity of faith and baptism and thereby affirmed also the necessity of the Church, for through baptism, as through a door, men enter the Church. Whosoever, therefore, knowing that the Catholic Church was made necessary by Christ, would refuse to enter or to remain in it, could not be saved* (8). Those who have come to know --- and in this case my sisters and brothers I am saddened to think that in our Diocese there are many people who know priests, who know religious women and Catholic institutions, but do not accept the totality of the institution --- these people are not on the path to salvation. But in the case of those who do not know this institution (in the priest there is no room for this ignorance because he has studied this matter and the same can be said of those persons who have been instructed in the faith) --- there can exist those situations in which people have not been instructed and therefore do not know anything about the Church. The Council states: *Those also can attain to salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the Gospel of Christ or His Church, yet sincerely seek God and moved by grace strive by their deeds to do His will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience* (9). How comforting to think about those who because of ignorance and with no ill-will on their part are unaware of the means that the Church offers and yet they attempt to live honest and holy lives. The grace of God will come to them in other ways apart from the sacraments. Yes, the grace of God, the Holy Spirit, Christ, will come to them because without Christ there is no salvation. Those people will achieve salvation.

These are the messengers of the Church and I am also speaking ... here I want to mention the second reading from the letter of Saint Paul because he is a model of the Church's messengers. I have already spoken about the historical framework in which this letter that we have been reading for the past three Sundays was written to the Philippians: Paul is in prison. Like any prisoner, Paul is fearful: *what are they going to do to me?* Nevertheless, filled with great trust, he thanks the Philippians who through a Christian intermediary gave him economic assistance. The words that we have proclaimed today are taken from the section where Paul expresses his gratitude for the economic assistance that the Philippians gave him (10): *I thank you for having shared my tribulation through means of your alms. But I have learned, in whatever situation I find myself, to be self-sufficient. In every circumstance and in all things I have learned the secret of being well fed or of going hungry, of living in abundance or of being in need. I have strength for everything through him who empowers me. In other words, thank you for providing me with food, but if I were here in jail dying and no one remembered me, know that I am grateful for the gifts that you have placed in my hands. I accept them because in payment my God will provide wonderfully for my needs and will do this in conformity with the treasure that is found in Jesus Christ* (11)

What a beautiful attitude of the independent person, of one who does not make his preaching or his support of the Church depend on money. My sisters and brothers, this is a real challenge for our Church. It is a challenge to present ourselves to the world, like Saint Paul, boldly free and yet this is meaning of autonomy from the idol of money and power. We should be grateful to those who gift us and yet recognize that these gifts are not necessary and therefore I am not going to accommodate my preaching according to the gifts that I receive or do not receive. *Many thanks! But know that I am indebted to God and not to you. Many thanks! But know that even though you have forgotten me, I love you the same and I will preach to you in the same way.* Truly my sisters and brothers, this is the message of God's feast.

I want to call upon this value and this independence and this boldness of the authentic preacher, of Saint Paul and speak to all the catechists, priests, Catholic institutions and to all those who desire to live as members of this authentic and gospel Church: let us become independent in the sense of freeing ourselves from arrogance and pride and let us adore the only God and place all our trust in this God. Everything is possible with the One who is my strength. The Lord is my strength. My treasure is Christ. The Lord is my hope and in him will my country be saved. I pray to him. I trust in him. I preach him. To the degree that we authentically believe in him, we will then experience the treasure of this feast of God in our hearts. As long as people attempt to combine trust in Jesus with trust in money they are unable to rejoice in this feast of God.

All human beings are invited but not all are worthy of the invitation

Therefore, my sisters and brothers, who are the invited ones? In today's readings we have listened to the prophet Isaiah say: *God provides for all people... and destroys the veil that veils all peoples* (12). All are called. When the king summons people to the wedding banquet that has been prepared for his son, notice that there are two invitations: a call is extended to the chosen people, the privileged people of Israel but they were found unworthy (13). Remember the framework in which Jesus is speaking. This is the last week of his life. This is the climax of a struggle and an antagonism between the true gospel that Jesus preaches and the false religion that was initiated by the Pharisees and the leaders of the Jewish people. This struggle is arriving at its tragic conclusion in the crucifixion. Jesus does not remain quiet but speaks directly to them and says: *The feast is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy to come.* This does not mean that the gospel is only preached to the poor. The rich are also called, but in order to understand the gospel it is necessary to experience this with the heart of the poor --- and this is difficult. This requires an autonomy from material goods in order to experience that the only need that one has is the need for God. Only in this way can one desire and accept the Kingdom of God.

Here Jesus is giving us a response to the slander that we often hear: *why is the Church only preaching to the poor? Why do we speak of a Church of the poor? Don't the rich have souls?* Yes, the rich have souls and we love them profoundly and desire that they be saved and not become imprisoned in their own idolatry. We ask them to become spiritual persons, to become poor in spirit, and to experience the anguish of those in need. The king then says: *go out, therefore, into the main roads and invite to the feast whomever you find. Go out to those places where you will find poor people. Call them and invite them* (14). The hall that had been prepared for the chosen ones was now filled with people of every social class.

Now Jesus speaks the second parable: *When the king came in to meet the guests he saw a man there not dressed in a wedding garment* (15). This showed a lack of courtesy. Even though one might be very poor, when one is called to this type of feast one must present oneself in the most decent way possible, clean and, if need be, with clothing that has been mended. It is obvious that this individual was one of those persons who gave no importance to these matters and this is also a lack of courtesy. The Church cannot excuse people because of a lack of education. The Lord confronts the man who despite God's goodness in calling the poor still became unworthy and says: *My friend, how is it you came in here without a wedding garment?* (16). The man did not open his mouth and could give no reasons for his present situation. He lacked courtesy and this is a great lesson.

The Vatican Council, in the statement that I read before, stated that in the Church one is able to find the means of salvation and then adds these frightening words: *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"* (17). It is not enough to come to Mass on Sunday. It is not enough to call oneself Catholic. It is not enough to bring one's children to the Church for the sacrament of Baptism even though this might be a great feast in society. Appearances are not enough and God cannot be paid with appearance. God desires the garment of justice. God wants Christians to clothe themselves in the garment of love. God wants those who participate in his feast to make a personal effort because Jesus is the primary One who saves us. But as Saint Augustine says: *God, who has created us without us, will not save us without our co-operation*⁴. God's does not need our consent to create us, but to save us we need to use our freedom; we need to know how to use material things and our person freely and with a sense of justice and charity.

My sisters and brothers, this is the precious lesson of God's feast with women and men. The gospel concludes by answering the question who are called: *Many are invited but few are chosen* (18). Thus all people are called and invited. God has no categories and the Church does not make distinctions. It is for this reason that the Church enters into conflict because the world desires to maintain distinctions. The Church knows that there is only one category: the just, those who fulfill the gospel, those who enter the feast of God with a wedding garment, those whose hearts have been converted. It is for this reason that they are called to God's feast but there are many who are still unable to enter this feast.

Events of the week

What do you say about the present situation in El Salvador? The most scandalous case this week --- and I say scandalous because it is a great abuse of human dignity --- is that of Reynaldo Cruz Menjivar who was numbered among those who had disappeared since December 21, 1977 and suddenly appeared on September 29th saying that he had fled from the Treasury Police. He seeks asylum in the Embassy of Venezuela. Do you want to know his condition when he arrived?

I have a medical certificate stating that the physical examination revealed a paleness in his skin and mucous, extreme bruising, a cadaverous face, sunken eyes, flattened nose, infected tongue, gingivitis, hemorrhage, lashes and scabs that are both recent and old, no problem with heart and lungs, sunken abdomen with a marked sensitivity in distinct parts of the body, the physical appearance of the patient was found to be extremely altered. These are

the men that we are making! It is for this reason that we cry out: *where are those who have disappeared?* Cruz Menjívar stated in the presence of a lawyer⁵ that he saw two other people who have disappeared, José Adalí Morales⁶, a student in his final year of studies in Economy and Cecilio Ramírez. One is dying and the other is blind and deaf. In face of this tragedy the Church asks for amnesty or at least bring these people before the courts.

We want to be logical in our demands for respect for that which is human and so we call upon a political party and a popular organization⁷ who are seeing this man, Cruz Menjívar, from their perspective and political point of view and therefore are not concerned about his physical condition or the pastoral concern of the Church for him. They want to make him into a banner for their party. This is also unjust. When we speak out against these abuses and on behalf of human rights, we do not do this from a political viewpoint. Rather we speak from the perspective of the Church's humanism, from the perspective of God's love, from a Christian perspective that demands us to enter the wedding feast and the Church which is charity and love --- we are commanded to enter this celebration with a wedding garment. Those politicians who want to manipulate this disgrace and pain are sinning against human rights.

Another recent scandal is the military operation that has taken place in Cinquera and the surrounding area. The National Guard, the Treasury Police, the army and ORDEN (Democratic Nationalist Organization) have occupied the villages of El Coco, Cacao, Llanitos and it appears that they want to replicate here the terror that was caused in Aguilares and San Pedro Perulapán: sacking of homes, arrests, tortures and people fleeing to the mountains⁸. Among those who are being persecuted are those who have Bibles and those who speak about the Church's doctrine. During these campaigns the words of the Archbishop and the priests are distorted as though we were not proclaiming the love of Christ, but calling the people to be subversive. You are witnesses to this fact and as Bishop Helder Cámara said when he was asked after his mail and phone had been watched for fourteen years: *I was not born for subversion and I am happy that the government has become aware that I have not preached what they said I preached*⁹.

In the urban area we are saddened these days by the assassinations and disappearances and we want to share with those families (too numerous to mention here) our prayers and sorrow and we also demand: *This situation cannot be tolerated. It is not right that a free man or a woman should go to buy some pupusas and find themselves abducted!*

In this environment of God's feast and as we reflect on who is invited and who is not worthy to participate in this feast I ask you to think about the death of a rancher, Ricardo Colucho Bosque and the respective statements of the Ministry of Defence¹⁰. They are worthy of our reflection. The military authorities have marked out death zones in our cities and in these areas soldiers are free to kill people without any fear of punishment. In other words, the victim is at fault. We are reminded of two cases that occurred in the capital: at the beginning of the year a young man was killed on the road to Los Planes de Renderos and then in March a woman was killed near the Apolo movie house when Police reserves stopped her.

We have asked for reform to the Law of Public Order, but reforms that are distinct from those people are requesting¹¹. Some want the areas that this law covers to be widened and that cases can be decided within the span of 120 days and left up to the discretion of the judge. This will only result in more poor people being sent to prison.

We are happy that the International Press Society has analyzed the degree of freedom of the press in the Western Hemisphere. We were happy to see the name of El Salvador among the countries that rejoice in this freedom. It was for this reason that we were saddened that the reporter Enrique Salvador Castro, a member of the Associated Press in El Salvador, was handcuffed and abused because of his strong protest against police action¹². Trusting in this freedom we have no doubt that there will be no further investigations into YSAX and *Orientación* and that these means of communication will be allowed to operate in an atmosphere of freedom so that the Church, through these means of communication, might be able to develop her right of freedom to profess her faith in Jesus Christ and in our God.

My sisters and brothers, as the Church that has gathered here to reflect on the Word of God and to be nourished by Christ who first suffered this crisis before a world that did not believe in him, let us raise up our cries of faith and hope in the Lord. Let us stand.

¹ See *El Mundo*, 9 + 10 October 1978.

² See Bulletin n° 46 of the Social Communication Secretariat of the Archdiocese of San Salvador, *Orientación*, 15 October 1978.

³ Homily of John Paul 1 during the eucharistic celebration in St John Lateran (23 September 1978), *L'Osservatore Romano*, 1 October 1978.

⁴ St Augustine, *Sermons*, 169, 13: PL 38, 915.

⁵ See "Testimonio del reo político Reynaldo Cruz Menjívar", *ECA* 360 (1978), pp. 840-858.

⁶ The surname of José Adalí is Melara.

⁷ The Christian Democratic Party and the Front for Unified Popular Action published two statements in which they presented the case of Reynaldo Cruz Menjívar as proof of the existence of political prisoners whose liberation they demanded. See *La Crónica del Pueblo*, 7 + 9 October 1978.

⁸ See "Solidaridad", *Orientación*, 22 October 1978.

⁹ See *La Prensa Gráfica*, 9 October 1978.

¹⁰ Mr Ricardo Colucho Bosque was assassinated by a soldier of the military barracks of Santa Ana when he was passing in front of it. The Ministry of Defence justified this, saying that for reasons of security the civilian population was limited in its approaches to security and military institutions. See *El Diario de Hoy*, 13 October 1978.

¹¹ See *La Prensa Gráfica*, 6 October 1978.

¹² See *La Prensa Gráfica*, 7 October 1978.

Marginal References (1) Ep 5,32: (2) Is 25,6: (3) Is 25,7-8: (4) Mt 19,6: (5) LG 14: (6) LG 14: (7) LG 14: (8) LG 14: (9) LG 16: (10) Ph 4,12-13: (11) Ph 4,19: (12) Is 25,6: (13) Is 25,7: (14) Mt 22,9: (15) Mt 22,11: (16) Mt 22,12: (17) LG 14: (18) Mt 22,14.