

## THE CHURCH, AWAITING CHRIST'S RETURN

**Thirty-third Sunday of Ordinary Time**  
**November 19, 1978**

*Proverbs 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31*

*1 Thessalonians 5:1-6*

*Matthew 25:14-30*

My beloved sisters and brothers.

Anyone who has attentively followed the Liturgical Year has realized that during the course of our Sunday celebrations we have encountered the Lord's teachings that illuminate the life of our community, the Church, now. This current year we have reflected on the gospel of Saint Matthew. Both the Liturgical Year and our reflection on the gospel of Saint Matthew are drawing near to their conclusion. We could say that this is the last Sunday because next week we will celebrate the feast of Christ the King which is like a crown on the whole mystery of Christ that we have reflected on throughout the year, our sign of obedience as blessed members of this Kingdom of God.

The last part of Saint Matthew's gospel presents to us Christ's discourse, a discourse known as the eschatological discourse that deals with the end times. This is the meaning of eschatology --- that which is last, definitive --- and since last Sunday we have reflected on the significance of eschatology as reflected in the thoughts of Jesus Christ, our Lord. It is a meditation that we make at the end of the Liturgical Year and as Christians we are invited to engage in this reflection so that we might see the goal of our lives in a proper perspective. In other words, we want to understand where we are headed as we journey through the days and months and years of our lives. It is wonderful to see how theology became aware of the fact that God saves us in history.

Salvation is an historical event --- not simply an event of the past but an event that embraces the current history of every people and nation, every woman and man and every community. This is an interesting fact that should be kept in mind because as we focus directly on these historical events week after week we come to see that we are not moving outside the context of the gospel or the mind of the Church but rather we realize that we are looking for salvation in the precise place where we should be looking for it --- in our historical events. Indeed, the salvation that God offers to the people of El Salvador has been incarnated into our own history. Thus this mystery of salvation unfolds in the life of the Archdiocesan Church, the life of every parish, village and community. The same mystery unfolds in the civil events which surround us and therefore we realize that not everything is good when viewed from the perspective of the Kingdom of God. In fact the great realities of our faith and our hope in Christ are in conflict with the attitudes of atheists, materialists, abusive and selfish people. We come to understand that it is natural that this Kingdom of God that is being built up in history will conflict with the historic realities. This does not

imply that we are meddling in politics. Rather we are simply seeking God's salvation in our history.

Therefore I am going to entitle today's homily: the Church, a community that actively awaits the return of Christ. The Church is a community, an active community that works and will cause conflict as she lives out her faith. The Church is active and waits the return of Christ. We proclaim in our profession of faith: *he will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead*. The Lord will return. The three ideas that I want to develop this morning are the following: 1) the Church is a community that is waiting, 2) this waiting does not mean that the Church is inactive, rather it is an active waiting, otherwise we are not Christian. What do we await? 3) We await the return of Christ. But how will this return of Christ take place --- this return that we await?

I have said that the Church is a community and I repeat this every Sunday because one of the most urgent messages of today's Church is to help Christians put aside an individualist mentality. Let us not talk about *my* salvation or *my* religion but let us live as God wants us to live. Let us speak of *our* salvation and *our* journey through history as a people. Let us imitate the people of Israel who journeyed through the desert together as a community. Such is our pilgrimage. Thus one of my greatest pastoral joys is to see the emergence and the formation of base communities of faith in so many different parts of the Archdiocese. These reflections on the Word of God speak to us about our witness as a community and help us to maintain a proper perspective and orientation. This is how the Christian communities have always acted.

Today's three readings are reflections on the reality of community. The book of Proverbs that presented us with the model woman is a reflection of the wisdom of the people of Israel who lived this philosophy as a people. It was their popular wisdom and belief that a woman's vanity was of no importance when compared to her fear of God and her interior attitude. The second reading is directed to the community of the Thessalonians and is meant to orient them as a community. I will be bold here and compare this to the situation that arises when I was unable to go to San Antonio Los Ranchos and therefore sent a letter. Saint Paul could not personally visit the community but nourished the people with his word. We have therefore before us reminders of these letters, these beautiful letters which comfort the today's Christian communities with the spirit of the primitive community. What else might we say about the gospel of Saint Matthew? What else might we say about the four gospels? They are the apostles' reflections that recount their life and experience of direct contact with Christ, reflections that were made as a community. Then, inspired by God, they wrote in such a way that the Christ whom we know in the gospels is the result of their reflection as a community.

How wonderful it is to understand that here in the Cathedral of San Salvador, on Sunday, November 19, 1978 we are united in our reflection with the many sister communities of the Archdiocese who are listening to us on the radio and reflecting together with us. We are also united to those communities that are celebrating the Eucharist with their pastors and reflecting on the same readings. We are a community whose faith is being nourished and who become aware of our spirit and way of life and also move forward together. We are nourished by the same sources that have nourished Christian communities for centuries, that nourished the community of the Old Testament. God has revealed his will to us and we become the People of God as we live the covenant that God has established with us. Indeed,

we come to know God's will and journey together according to God's will. This is the reason that we come together to celebrate the Eucharist each Sunday.

### **A community that awaits**

My first point is that this Christian community is a community that waits. What do I mean by this? This is a characteristic of Christian women and men and for this reason the Christian community is called an eschatological community, a community that awaits the final consequences of their development. Where is history headed? Where is my life going? Where is the Church going? Everything is moving toward an eschatological goal.

The Old Testament has spoken about this and I commented here on the meaning of the Day of the Lord. The prophets spoke about this Day of the Lord (1) when God waits for us with open arms and rewards our good works or punishes our evil deeds. In former times, since Christ had not come, the Day of the Lord was very nebulous. The prophets did not have the privilege that we, as Christians, have --- the privilege of knowing Christ who came twenty centuries ago and initiated the Day of the Lord. We live in the final phase of history and as we will see later, Christ is the key, the objective, the goal, and Day of the Lord. When Jesus and the apostles proclaimed that the Day of the Lord was near, there arose the idea that is also present among some of the Protestant sects --- in such a such a year the Lord will come. They think the time is near. But Jesus wanted to create a certain mystery of uncertainty concerning all of this and therefore Saint Paul writes to the Thessalonians: *concerning the times and seasons, my sisters and brothers, you have no need for anything to be written to you. For you yourselves know that the Day of Lord will come like a thief in the night. Since you are not children of the night but children of the day, stay alert and sober* (2). Saint Paul reminds the Thessalonians who defended the nearness of the Day of the Lord, the nearness of the final judgment and who therefore did not work but became lazy (religion had become the opium of the people), that they must work. (3)

There also arose among the Thessalonians a doubt: even though Paul had proclaimed the nearness of the Day of the Lord some people died and people continued to die. What is the fate of those who have died and what was their own fate, the fate of those who are alive when the Lord comes? Saint Paul resolves this issue. You have been reading about this in his letter or have heard it read in the Mass for the deceased: *We do not want you to be unaware about those who have fallen asleep. They will also arise and we who are living will be transformed. Even though we have not passed through death, we will be transformed because in order to participate in this eschatological phase, the final and definitive phase of the Kingdom of God, the phase of eternal life which was initiated when he was on earth, God needs to transform men and women* (4). Thus the dead will rise. Those who did good will be raised to eternal life and those who did evil will be raised for punishment and ignominy. Those who are alive will be transformed in order to be taken up with the Lord in glory --- this includes those who did good deeds, those who are doing good deeds and those who are working in accord with God's will. Those who are not acting in this way, even though they are alive, will not escape the Lord's wrath. Their lives will also be transformed into an eternal life of suffering. They will be given an immortality of pain, a second death (5) which the Bible calls dying without being able to die. The Day of the Lord is truly an incredible reality. My sisters and brothers, this is not some fantasy but is what gives our religion its eschatological character. Therefore we must live our lives and await this final conclusion.

How shall we live? I ask you this question as we are in the midst of this reality of November, 1978. This same question was posed to one of the saints of the Church<sup>1</sup>: if you knew that today was the day of the final judgment, what would you do? What would we do? One of the students who was with the saint said: *I would run to Church to pray and repent of my sins so that I would be found in God's grace.* Another said that he would go to confession so that he would not be found in a state of sin. The saint responded that he would continue playing because he was doing the will of God and so if the Lord took him to himself he would find him doing God's will.

This is the tranquil life of those Christians who are where they should be at the time of their death. Therefore, my sisters and brothers, the question that I place before my heart I also pose to you: *at this moment are we where we should be if today were the day of surprise, that day that arrives like a thief in the night?* How many disgraces and deaths do we weep over week after week? All those persons who have been assassinated or have died in accidents or fires or in earthquakes or airplane accidents --- so many people have died this week! Have they found the Lord coming in his eschatological moment? Have they been prepared for the end of their life? Are all of us, the people of El Salvador, where we ought to be?

It is for this reason that I like to enlighten this present moment of our historical reality. I do this not to disturb anyone but simply to fulfill my prophetic mission. For as Saint Paul said to the Thessalonians: *you are where you should be ... I cannot tell you the day or the time* (6). No one can tell other people when they are going to die. As Christians we can only say: *walk on the paths you should walk so that the Lord might find you on the right path.* My sisters and brothers, when I speak about the community that awaits I want to remind you that this has been a beautiful week for the community life of the Archdiocese. Many people are truly where they should be but sadly many are not and so we now move on to my second point.

### **An active waiting**

An active waiting. The first reading speaks to us about a woman who is characterized by her strength and does not seek glory in her beauty or charm or vanity but rather seeks glory in her fear of the Lord. The Bible tells us that these characteristics should be praised (7). What a beautiful message for women! Beauty is vain and fragile and the prophets compare this to the grass that in the morning is fresh but at night is nothing more than dry hay that can be taken into one's hand like grass that can be pulled out. The woman who fears the Lord, the diligent woman, the woman who is a glory for her husband, the woman who does not fear winter or bad times because she is always prepared, the woman who has an eschatological sense --- such a woman is worthy of great praise.

It is difficult for a woman whose nature is focused on vanity to understand that her true greatness is not found in being admired because of exterior realities but rather she will be praised by God and a true glory for her family and her husband because of her inner spirit. Thus her greatness is not found in exterior splendor but in her virtue and practice of Christianity. This is the position that the gospel places before us today.

Last Sunday we reflected on a beautiful parable, the parable of the ten virgins who were waiting to accompany the bridegroom (8). Five of them were prudent and prepared and were received into the wedding feast while five others did not know how to wait and instead slept

and were unprepared. When they returned from buying oil for their lamps they found the doors to the feast had been closed. They had to knock on the door and the Lord told them: *I do not know you* (9). How sad will be the Day of the Lord (the hour) for those who have not lived their lives with an eschatological meaning, who have not been watchful, who are surprised by the thief who arrives in the middle of the night.

Today's reading invites us to engage in an active waiting (10). A man entrusted his possessions to his employees and then went on a journey. After much time he returned (11). This is the meaning of waiting, after much time (we do not know how long) ... but Jesus has proclaimed these words in order to let Christians know that the time between their hoping and the realization of that hope will be very long. Among us there are people who are advanced in years. Blessed are those elderly people who like Simeon live their lives in hope and when they hold in their arms Jesus the Redeemer they sing like the swan and want to die: *Now you may let your servant go in peace because I have lived with this hope* (12).

My beloved sisters and brothers, I find the teaching of the parable of the talents expressed in a modern form by the Council. In the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (13), we are presented with a vision of this world and all its progress as preparing the material for the Kingdom of God. Therefore, we cannot neglect the work that must be done in this world (14). We must inculcate in Christians the attitude that people cannot live in conformity with the thinking of this world but must live with an eschatological hope. In light of the danger of the modern Thessalonians --- and there are many such people who think that the material goods of this earth have no value and therefore they dedicate themselves to heavenly realities. As a result piety loses its connection to reality and people are scandalized when the Archbishop speaks about obligations and duties on earth. They say the archbishop is meddling in politics when he demands that politicians, government officials, the National Guard and the Security Forces respect the rights of Christians. If these people are Christian they should remember that there exists an eternal sanction. I want to remind judges who sell themselves and all those who play games with the laws of the State of the eschatological meaning of our religion: the judge, who never sells himself, will come! He will bring into the light of day the abuses and illegal actions that were done in our nation. My sisters and brothers, to preach about this is to place oneself in the situation that God desires because God desires an authentic and integral Christianity. It is very beautiful to live a piety that only demands song and prayer, spiritual meditation and contemplation --- this will only occur, however, at the time when we enter the Kingdom of God in heaven where there will be no injustices and where sin will no longer be a reality that Christians must overcome. On Mount Tabor Jesus reminded the apostles who wanted to remain on the mountain and contemplate all that had occurred at the time of the transfiguration: *Let us go down the mountain for there is work that still must be done* (15).

The Council states: *The expectation of a new earth must not weaken but rather stimulate our concern for cultivating this one. For here grows the body of a new human family, a body which even now is able to give some kind of foreshadowing of the new age* (16). As Christians we are called to live this reality in our own journey here on earth. We are called to reflect this reality in our lived experiences and in our eschatological hope. What a beautiful word --- reflect! We are called to reflect this reality just as the dawn of the new day reflects the rising sun --- reflects that the sun is coming. The lives of Christians ought to be like the dawn that reflects a new century. Indeed as Christian women and men, filled with hope, faith and holiness, we ought to reflect to all humanity that life does not end with death but rather there is a Kingdom of God toward which we journey --- a kingdom where we will be happy,

where there will be justice and consummated love. Until that time, however, we are just the dawn, an announcement and a glimpse of things to come.

The Christian who does not proclaim this sun is not an authentic Christian. Christians who extend to others a political and economic redemption and liberation (a redemption and liberation of this world) and forget to proclaim the great values of eternity are not presenting people with a true liberation. Thus I stated in my Pastoral Letter<sup>2</sup> that the Church supports the liberation efforts of all those organizations as long as their efforts are just. The Church, however, does not identify herself with these organizations but rather gives a wide scope to these organizations and to all people who work on behalf of justice, for true liberation and for the goal of true freedom.

Pope Paul VI who continually enlightens my thinking in these matters, a man who understood the present time and never betrayed the eternal world, stated that if a Christian becomes a member of some popular political organization or if a priest or bishop did the same and then betrayed the reality of eternal liberation and did not proclaim liberation from sin, the authentic liberation that Jesus brought to the world, if these people allowed all their efforts on behalf of liberation to revolve around political, social and economic matters, then they are mutilating the reality of liberation and are not providing people with the true strength and power that Christian liberation proclaims to the world. My sisters and brothers, let us understand this, especially you my sisters and brothers who are members of popular political organizations --- let us understand this! Do not sell out your faith and your eternal hope for selfish interests! Listen carefully you who slander me because I am not preaching a revolutionary liberation. I have never preached violence. In fact in my Pastoral Letter I said that I detest violence when it becomes some kind of mystique and appears as the only way to resolve matters<sup>3</sup>.

I advocate on behalf of the Christian idea of peace and so I tell all who work on behalf of the world's liberation, those who want to receive better wages and treatment during this harvest season of coffee, sugar-cane and cotton: all of these desires are legitimate but do not focus just on these things. Please allow the pain and suffering of our people to enter into your hearts. Become identified with the pain of those who leave their homes and villages and embark on a painful migration to farms in search of their only income for the whole year! On their journey they find no work but encounter others who abuse them, deceive them, and steal from them. How can we bring a sense of justice to these interactions? Again to everyone I say: remember that which is eternal!

The Council states: *Hence, while earthly progress must be carefully distinguished from the growth of Christ's kingdom, to the extent that the former can contribute to the better ordering of human society, it is of vital concern to the Kingdom of God (Gaudium et Spes, #39).* As Christians we are not reactionaries for as the President said we know that nations must progress. We want to state, however, that the progress of a nation is not enough. Progress must be based on a foundation of justice. If not, then national security becomes security for those who have been enriched and progress benefits a minority. Progress must benefit everyone, for as the President pointed out when referring to those reactionaries who do not want to see any kind of social reform: if progress is to benefit everyone then it is necessary that the laws and the moral power of the state not be repressive (as though their sole object were to repress) and it is also necessary that the just efforts and demands of the *campesinos* and the needy should not be confused with terrorism. The reactionary forces that do not want to allow social change and the transformation of society --- these forces should be repressed.

Let us love progress but not progress for itself. Rather let us love that true progress that applies the doctrine of national security in a way that is different from the present situation in which a few people benefit while the majority of people live in greater misery. May we experience true progress so that all those in need might receive the benefits of just laws for the Lord has given the richness of our land to all the people of El Salvador.

My beloved sisters and brothers, the Council Fathers have spoken some beautiful words as they encourage us not to grow tired of doing good: we are a people who are waiting but let us never become lazy. Our waiting is active and therefore after having disseminated the gifts of human dignity, fraternal unity and freedom, in a word, after having disseminated all the wonderful fruits of nature and human labor throughout the land and after having done so in accord with the Lord's spirit and the Lord's command, we will find these gifts purified from every stain and illuminated and transfigured at the time when Christ hands over the eternal and universal kingdom to the Father: the kingdom of truth and life, the kingdom of holiness and grace, the king of justice, love, and peace.

What a beautiful hope! Therefore let us work together because at this time when our proclamation goes against the current and when it seems as though we are plowing the sea, yet we know that we are going to find that our labor produces many fruits of conversion and holiness. Above all, waiting with Christian joy is a characteristic of all of you who are in agreement with and in solidarity with this doctrine of the Church --- a doctrine that is not mine but is the doctrine of the contemporary Church. Continue to work on behalf of true human dignity! Continue to be courageous in proclaiming the doctrine of Christ! Do not be afraid to denounce sin in the world! Incarnate your religion in the realities of our history because after having acted in this way and after having worked in this way in the world we have Christ's promise that we will meet the Lord.

I believe that our lives are like the process of mining. Gold is taken from the mine but in the beginning the gold is mingled with other worthless metals. Through a chemical process the gold is refined and purified. Blessed are those who have made their lives reflect this mining process. It does not matter that we live our lives in the midst of the world's evils. The Council reminds us that sin is also at work in the world. The kingdom of Satan is also in a phase of waiting because the emissaries of the Evil One will also arise (and Satan has many emissaries). They are waiting for the definitive kingdom where they will arise in ignominy. The Council states that today the progress of the world is disfigured by the sins of humanity. Thus the progress of the world is not identified with the Kingdom of God because as I have just said progress can involve people in selfish interests. Progress and national security can benefit just a few people and this is sinful. This form of progress is not identified with the Kingdom of God. Progress is ambivalent and therefore we must be careful. When you acquire a position or a responsibility that pays a higher salary, give thanks to God but be careful! If you progress socially, politically and economically, give thanks to God but again, be careful because progress is ambivalent, that is, it can be used for that which is good and that which is evil.

Women and men are placed on earth and the Lord gives them five talents or two talents -- - no two people are alike. The Church does not proclaim an absolute equality but preaches justice and fraternal love among different people. There are no two sisters or brothers who are the same but where there is love then people can fraternally share their concerns, their afflictions and their possessions. The Council documents remind us of a phrase that Saint Paul wrote to the Corinthians and says that those who live in the world and move the world forward toward greater progress should not conform themselves to the world's situation, that is, act with malice or vanity because these transform human activity into sin. God desires

that all human activity should be oriented toward the service of God and the love of women and men. Let us work toward these goals. In our midst there are many efforts being made in the area development and progress. Blessed be God for this work! During these days I participated in ceremonies at the Academia de Costura y Confección. Today at the entrance of the church I received a beautiful Nativity set that was made in La Palma, Chalatenango where El Instituto Semilla de Dios is a witness of this progress. Hopefully these efforts will maintain their Christian orientation. On these occasions I have always told you that the Church does not promote these sewing academies or workshops so that people can progress materially. The Church wishes to place within the hearts of people true wisdom, a spirit and a mystique that enables them to distinguish between progress and the Kingdom of God and that also enables them to realize that progress should support and assist the Kingdom of God to become more present in our midst.

### **Events of the week**

The day after tomorrow we celebrate the feast of the Virgin of Peace in San Miguel. We greet the Mother of the people of El Salvador and remember that on November 21, 1966 Pope Paul VI proclaimed the Virgin of Peace the patroness of our nation. If there are no difficulties I hope to visit this community tomorrow, November 20<sup>th</sup> around noon.

Our Archdiocesan community rejoices because we find ourselves in harmony with the present Pope. He restated what he said in his inaugural homily: *open the political and economic systems to Christ!* I have been saying the same thing. The Pope said that these systems are fearful of women and men and their exercise of responsible freedom and this fear often worsens the link that leads to violence and repression.

Who here does not find a harmony between the Pope and this humble archbishop who is preaching to you? There is no need for repression! There is no reason to mistrust the responsible freedom of women and men! The doors must be opened to Christ and greater participation must be given to all the people of El Salvador so that they can shape the common good of our nation.

The Pope has exhorted us to defend human rights and sees this as the great task of our time. I want to thank Mr. Napoleón Navarro Ovido for having made posters that he placed on our doors. These posters are a proclamation of the news that was published by *La Prensa Gráfica* --- news that referred to the Pope's words: *We should not view women and men as serving systems but rather systems must be placed at the service of women and men.* People will now say that the Pope is subversive and yes, he truly is subversive. In an atmosphere where systems want to play games with people the Pope says: *No! Men and women are not created to serve systems but systems must be placed at the service of men and women.* He clarified his words by stating that he was referring to social, political and cultural systems. His discourse was interrupted several times by applause. Was the Pope vain and seeking applause? Or did the people experience a certain harmony with the Church's thinking and therefore on this occasion applauded this holy preacher, the Pope?

The Pope also encouraged ecumenism as a spiritual and pastoral need. With joy I am able to tell you that we have spoken with our evangelical sisters and brothers and very soon we will meet to plan and work together in an authentic ecumenical sense. I ask your prayers because we are dealing with an effect that can only be achieved by God.



I was very happy to receive a telegram that was sent to me by the priests who had gathered together for their retreat. It reads: *Thirty-one priests gathered together to make their spiritual retreat and as one of the practical fruits of a prolonged reflection on our priestly identity we want to reiterate to you our union with you, with your pastoral ministry and with your word. We are aware of the fact that our priesthood only has meaning when there is a unity with you, our bishop.* Blessed be God and I thank you and want to pose this question to everyone: if you want to be Christian are you willing to be in union with your pastor? Are you willing to have greater trust in your pastor?

I also had the joy of participating in vicariate meetings in which the priests and the pastoral ministers came together in various sectors of our diocese, for example, in Mejicanos and yesterday in Chalatenango. During the meeting in Chalatenango, Father Fabián Amaya led the group in a profound evaluation of the ministry of the Episcopal Vicariate. Priests, religious and lay people participated in this meeting and Father Rafael Urrutia, a new priest, became a member of this team and another new priest, Father Héctor Figueroa, was already a member of the team. There is much hope for a very lively pastoral ministry there.

I want to highlight one of the many works in Chalatenango, namely, the Patronato Pro-Seminario. There we are going to have a number of the minor seminarians. I want to join this idea to another reality that I found when I entered the Cathedral. A dear friend of the Serra Club was putting up some posters on the doors of the Cathedral (you can see these when you leave). The idea is the following: What can we do so that the Kingdom of God continues to come alive in our world? The answer: this is the time to promote priestly and religious vocations. The Serra Club and El Patronato Chalateco Pro-Seminario have placed their finger on the mark --- the promotion of priestly and religious vocations is most urgent for our Church.

There was also a meeting of the Priest's Senate. This is a group of priest representatives who are called senators and unite the vicariates. We had a very positive meeting and I want to inform you that several months ago I asked this group to undertake a study of the relationship between the priests and the bishop. Yesterday the results of this study were tabulated and later we will make a sociological, theological and pastoral interpretation of these results. We will also make this information available to you. But at this time I am very optimistic because the study has resulted in very positive responses. I am happy that all my priests, or at least the greater majority of my priests, are in solidarity with the pastoral guidelines which I have humbly tried to implement as the Archbishop of San Salvador.

I also want to congratulate the vicariate of Asunción which comprises the sector of Flor Blanca, San José de la Montaña, Colonia Escalón, San Benito and La Ceiba for two initiatives. They have just concluded a course in theology. I participated in the formal ceremonies that concluded the first cycle. Sixty people were very happy to have received instruction about the dogmatic, moral and pastoral life of the Church, as well as a deeper understanding about some of the recent documents of the Church. They expressed their satisfaction of having obtained knowledge about these realities that are often criticized because of ignorance. I now ask these lay people who have access to social and political and professional leaders and who are aware of the mind and the spirit of the Church --- I ask you to become witnesses. Do not allow the Church to be slandered, especially slandered because of ignorance.\*

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\* Translator's Note: The Archbishop said that he wanted to speak about two initiatives but only mentioned one.

The major seminarians have given me great satisfaction because despite this being a time of vacation for them, they gathered together for three days to reflect on themes concerning their vocation in the present situation.

I am also happy to announce to you that on November 15<sup>th</sup> the Universidad José Simeón Cañas will begin a month of theological presentations on current themes, primarily themes of ecclesiology. If you have the opportunity I invite you to participate in these courses which are very necessary in our time.

I was in the parish of Cristo Redentor in the area of El Carmen where I had the joy of coming together with various communities to celebrate the sacrament of Confirmation for some young women and men.

In the parish of La Luz we also celebrated a joyful graduation of the ninth grade students in La Escuela Madre Catarina DiMaggio and another graduation in La Academia Madre Scaglietti. We are able to see here how the Church, in a modest way, is working on behalf of people who are poor.

In Hopango we celebrated the patronal feast of Saint Christopher with the confirmation of some young people and had a very interesting dialogue between the youth and the bishop.

At 4:00pm I hope to be in the community of Chiltiupán.

Today the laity have called people together for a meeting and a time of reflection in the parish hall of San José de la Montaña.

I want to remind you that on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, that is, within two weeks, a new norm with regard to the administration of the Sacrament of Confirmation will take effect. We will no longer confirm small children and if you want to study this theme in depth I recommend that you read our magazine *Busqueda* which is dedicated to the Sacrament of Confirmation. I will soon publish an instruction about the sacraments and their administration in the Archdiocese.

In a letter dated October 13<sup>th</sup>, Bishop Obando, the Archbishop of Nicaragua, has asked me to thank you for the generous donation that we were able to send him. The Archbishop said: *I can assure you that your words gave me great comfort during this difficult time in which we are living.* You have been able to read in the newspapers about the difficulties that our sisters and brothers in Nicaragua are experiencing. There are many living in exile in Honduras and also here among us. I beg you to not close the doors of charity to the people who are living in this situation. I also beg you to pray for a resolution of this crisis since it seems that international mediation has not been successful because of the caprice of the present leader who refuses to resign. There is danger that a new civil war will erupt and so again I ask you to pray so that peace and calm might be restored to that country.

La Universidad José Simeón Cañas has published a statement about the present situation in El Salvador. I recommend that you study this statement and I am in agreement with the analysis that they have made. Neither repression nor the softening of repression is the remedy. The remedy is found by responding to the true causes of this evil situation. I make my own the call that the university has made to various institutions and those people who work in the university: look for the solution that will eliminate this evil from our country.

I received a letter from the people of Arcatao and I speak about this here because this is the Christian community that has entered into solidarity with our brother Cecilio Ramirez who was captured in Honduras in July, 1977. He had gone to Honduras to look for his grandfather and nothing more was known about him until Reynaldo Cruz Menjívar spoke about him in his public statement. At that time Reynaldo said that Cecilio was in agony in a secret prison of the Treasury Police. The community of Arcatao reiterates their plea that Reynaldo either be freed as soon as possible or brought before the courts (if he is still alive).

My sisters and brothers, I also want to share with you the thoughts of a teacher, a companion of José René Franco and Carlos Zelaua Rosa, professors who were riddled with bullets in San Miguel.\*

As a community that is living the mystery of active waiting, the mystery of this gospel witness, we are saddened as we remember that this week has been a week of great violence. The FPL destroyed three helicopters in San Miguel. The ERP took over several broadcasting stations that published the news that was demanded of them as a condition for the release of Mr. Monedero. The government, however, has prohibited the broadcasting of this news. The detective Elpidio Aquiles Aguilar Chacón was assassinated and there has been no clarification of the motive for this violent act and no one has taken responsibility for this criminal action.

There was a prolonged armed confrontation in San Miguel in which three people, who are said to be guerrilleros, died. It is also said that some members of the security forces also died.

Two young men were killed in Cuscatancingo. The FPL assassinated José Arnulfo Vides, a judge in San José las Flores. The FPL exploded bombs in a restaurant in San Salvador and in the offices of the Treasury Police in Metapán. The ERP also exploded bombs in an electrical sub-station that caused a blackout of several hours in the western zone of San Salvador.

I am saddened and want to express my solidarity with those who are the victims of abuse. The Archbishop also finds himself in a position of being abused by the executive branch of the government. Here I am referring to the arbitrary and illegal change of the Statutes of Cáritas. I am concerned that a very dangerous precedent has been set as civil authorities improperly inserted themselves into a situation dealing with Church law.

We are also saddened by new fires that occurred this week in Tipografía el Planeta, and workshops and warehouses that belong to the mayor of San Salvador.

I also pray that God will quickly resolve the labor situations that I have spoken about on other occasions.

I want to mention the young man Julio César Velázquez, 17 years old and the son of Santos Velázquez. He was very concerned about the miserable situations that exist in the marginated zones of our country and was assassinated by unknown persons.

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\* Translator's Note: this paragraph seems to be incomplete since the "thoughts" are never stated here.

I express my solidarity with the Commission on Human Rights which visited Isabel\* Rodríguez Barrera in the hospital and has shown that even though there is no legal case against him and there is no outstanding court order against him yet he is being closely guarded by the Security Forces.

But my sisters and brothers, there is a note of optimism. On Wednesday the law concerning administrative litigation was approved. Our ministry is also one of enlightening with joy the hopes that can be found among our people. We will no longer have in the Supreme Court a panel that will resolve cases between officials in public administration and other authorities or individuals who have made claims against the definitive resolution of public administration. We congratulate the Assembly for this effort to establish greater justice and hopefully these efforts will not be frustrated by the famous phrase: *those who make the law also set up the traps*.

We conclude our homily in order to draw near to the altar with the beautiful thoughts that are presented in the readings, thoughts which I have entitled: a community that actively awaits the return of Christ. As the host is consecrated we say: *Come, Lord Jesus!* My sisters and brothers let us not forget that we await someone who lives and who will come again! He will not deceive us! This waiting has been described with some beautiful words and last week I spoke about the *parousia*, a Greek word that means presence and refers to the appearance of a governor or an emperor who is about to arrive. We await the great emperor, Christ, our Lord.

This waiting is also described by another Greek word, *epiphany* which refers to the revelation and the manifestations of God. God is going to reveal himself publicly and his Kingdom will be revealed to the world. Blessed are those who are waiting for him and who have lived their lives in active waiting.

This waiting is also called *apocalypse*, a name that was given to the last book of the Bible. Apocalypse is a manifestation or a revelation and here we speak about this waiting in apocalyptic terms. Let us not allow ourselves to be guided by these human figures of the Bible. Saint Paul refers to Christ coming among the clouds and people going out to meet him. This is apocalyptic language and what is of greater interest to us is the reality that is referred to, namely, that Christ will appear and that all those who are actively waiting him will receive their reward just as is stated in today's reading: *Well done, my good and faithful servant ...come, share your master's joy* (Matthew 25:23). How wonderful to hear the Lord's greeting.

My sisters and brothers, this eschatology of the epiphany, the parousia, and the apocalypse must be lived today. I have explained to you that eschatology is not simply waiting for some future event to take place. There is an eschatology that is occurring in the present moment and if you want to have a clearer understanding of this reality read Saint John's gospel and his three letters. Saint John is a man who lived, in a very profound way this future eschatology in the present moment. I told you before that Christianity is like a pendulum that moves between *the now and not yet*. This is the rhythm of the life of a Christian. If we live in God's grace then we partake in the Kingdom of Heaven. If we actively await the return of the Lord, then as the Council says, the Kingdom of God is mysteriously present in our history.

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\* Translator's Note: Isabel is a very common man's name in Latin America.

The Kingdom of God is in our midst. Indeed Jesus has said: *the kingdom of God is among you* (Luke 17:21). Let us look into our hearts and live this eschatology today. Let us live the joy of this eschatology. Jesus initiated this eschatological time when he rose from the dead. He communicated this same hope to all people when he spoke to Martha and said: *all those who believe in me, even if they die, they will live* (John 11:25). Jesus lives and this is the beauty of our Sunday celebration because to come to Mass on Sunday is to come together to encounter the Lord.

One day the consecrated host will not be in the hands of a poor priest and then there will be no need for Mass...

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<sup>1</sup> Reference to St Aloysius Gonzaga.

<sup>2</sup> See *La Iglesia y las organizaciones políticas populares* (6 August 1978) pp. 27-28.

<sup>3</sup> See *Ibid.*, p. 50.