

## RESURRECTION, KEY AND SEAL OF THE NEW COVENANT

**Easter Sunday**  
**April 15, 1979**

*Acts 10:34a, 37-43*  
*Colossians 3:1-4*  
*John 20:1-19*

My dear sisters and brothers.

Happy Easter! The long Lenten journey terminates on the heights of glory. During the Lenten season we examined this history of the covenant between God and humankind. God desires to obtain the love of his people yet throughout history people have rejected God. Nonetheless, God continues to love with an eternal love and this love has conquered. Today, the celebration of Easter gives meaning to and explains this on-going struggle of God. For this reason Easter occupies the main place in the liturgy so that we can say all the other celebrations in the year don't have meaning unless we understand the paschal mystery we celebrate today.

My homily this morning is more than an explanation, or an exhortation or a catechetical instruction, it is a testimony of faith that enables me to say with my beloved people: *I believe in the Risen Christ*. I want my word to be the same joyful announcement that constituted the nucleus of the Apostles' preaching: *Christ is risen! This is indeed great news!* Above all else, I want my words to be an invitation to lift up our hearts in gratitude and truly celebrate the Eucharist this Sunday. All of humankind kneels before the God who loves us so much that he allows his Son to die on the cross for us, but then raises him up to new life. The hope of humankind is found in the triumph of the Risen One.

The three readings that we have just listened too are not only an announcement, an invitation and a testimony of thanksgiving, but also invite us to reflect on this great event. And so the title I give to my homily this morning is: *The Resurrection, the seal and the key of the New covenant*. As usual, three ideas: first, The Resurrection, key to understanding all of God's revelation; second, The Church, the depository and witness of the Resurrection; and third, The baptized, participants in the same Spirit that raised Jesus to new life.

### **The Resurrection, key to understanding all of God's revelation**

In the first place, I invite you, my beloved sisters and brothers, to view the Resurrection as the key to understanding all of God's revelation. The gospel of Saint John concludes with a wonderful honesty. He tells us that he had run to the tomb and because he was younger, arrived there first. Out of respect for Peter, the elder, he waited and allowed him to enter first. Peter reflected on the empty tomb. John saw the burial cloths of a body that had been raised up to eternal life and also reflected on the meaning of this. The gospel that proclaims the revelatory phrase: *he saw and believed* (1). Until then, John did not understand the Scriptures that Jesus had to be raised from the dead.

As long as Jesus had not been raised up to new life, the disciples were missing a key. If the resurrection did not take place, the disciples would be unable to explain the conduct, doctrine, miracles and the marvelous works of the Redeemer. Everything remained a mystery until the moment that he had previously announced became a reality: *...what should I say? Father, save me from this hour? But it was for this purpose that I came to this hour* (2). *The Son of Man must be handed over to sinners and be crucified and rise on the third day* (3). These words, however, were not understood by the disciples. They could not understand how the Son of God, made man, would have to be so humiliated. The disciples experienced a crisis of faith until this great revelation took place.

In today's second reading, we find an account of the life of Jesus. Peter, speaking to a centurion and a group of Gentiles, tells them of the disciples' encounter with Jesus who was anointed by God with the power of the Spirit. (4) Because God was with Jesus, he walked among them doing good and healing the oppressed. They were witnesses to this fact. They had lived a wonderful life with the Lord but there was something missing. What is the connection between all of these? The Vatican Council tells us: *God, the inspirer and author of both Testaments, wisely arranged that the New Testament be hidden in the Old and the Old be made manifest in the New. For, though Christ established the new covenant in His blood, still the books of the Old Testament with all their parts, caught up into the proclamation of the Gospel, acquire and show forth their full meaning in the New Testament and in turn shed light on it and explain it* (5)

The recapitulation of everything in Christ. Why did God create and see that everything was good? Why did God form a people in the Old Testament? Why did God chose the elderly Abraham to form a people as numerous as the stars of heaven and the dust of the earth? Why was God so concerned about a captive people that he freed them from the oppressing hand of the Egyptians, and with wonderful signs led them through the desert to the Promised Land? What is the meaning of the Prophet's words? What is the meaning of Yahweh's Servant, the Son of God who came not in glory and majesty but as a humble man who allowed himself to be whipped and beaten, spat upon and humiliated? Who can understand all of this?

It was necessary for nature itself to be surprised on Good Friday and even more surprised on Saturday, the evening when the resurrection event occurred. At that moment the meaning of the Chosen People of God and the beauty of all creation was shown forth with the splendor of grace. If today we cry out beneath the weight of injustice and the abuse of sinners, let us realize that this is not the destiny that God has planned for us. Humankind is simply an enigma. Indeed we make creation more enigmatic through our sins of selfishness, greed and injustice. Therefore, Christ's redemption was necessary, but when he died the mystery became even more clouded. Is this the destiny of the just ones! Is it really worth the effort to live a good life and then end one's life on the cross! Is it necessary to be so passive that one does not use violent means and arms to conquer and overcome the injustices of the world? Could not God have sent an army of angels to conquer those who persecuted Jesus and the Church? This, however, is thinking with the small mind of men and women. Those who want to change the world through violence ought to reflect, like John when he arrived at the tomb of the Risen Lord. For now that Jesus has been raised to new life, now that the enemy has fled in terror, now that those who want to deny the reality of the resurrection have spoken, *his disciples came by night and stole him while we were asleep* (6), now everything is understood. For who can cover the sun with their fingers? The resurrection is a sun that shines forth and now no one can silence the humiliating situation of the Lord's enemies.

The mystery of suffering can only be explained in light of the resurrection and the triumph of the One humiliated, tortured, oppressed, obedient unto death, the One who has been given *the name that is above every name, [so] that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth* (7), that One has now been glorified. This is the glory that gives meaning to the suffering of humanity. This is the meaning of Easter: Christ is risen, the beginning of a new creation. Now we understand that to place all our hope in the Risen Christ, even when we seem to be at a dead-end, is to attach ourselves to the All Powerful who will enable us to survive every situation.

He gives an eschatological meaning to the values of life. Commenting on the resurrection of the Lord, Saint Paul tells us today: *if then you were raised with Christ, seek what is above* (8). Paul is not speaking about some type of alienation from the things of this world, rather he is telling us to put the things that must be done here on earth into a perspective that considers the realities above. In other words, we must continue to work for liberation and the realization of the just demands of the people. This, however, will not be achieved through the use of violence and arms, but only if we view all of this from the perspective of Christ's triumph.

Therefore, as I wrote in my Pastoral Letter, *The Church and Popular Political Organizations*, the Church can never identify herself with any armed struggle. The Church does not provoke violence. The Church is not a group of guerrillas nor a group that seeks immediate liberation: political, sociological or economical. The Church understands this and encourages people who have a political vocation to organize themselves and work for a just liberation on earth. But the Church is not satisfied with these worldly liberations. She says: *plus ultra*, true liberation is beyond this world. The liberation that Jesus offers us looks at *the things above*. From the perspective of the things of above and eternity, from the perspective of a profound liberation from sin that was achieved by Christ on the cross, from this perspective the true liberation of the world is realized.

There can be no liberation while there is sin in the heart. Why change structures? What is the use of violence and armed forces if one acts with hatred and seeks to maintain power or obtain power and then later becomes a tyrant who initiates a new tyranny. In Christ we seek true freedom: freedom that will transform the heart. Saint Paul tell us today: *if then you were raised with Christ, seek what is above* (9). Look at the earthly freedom and the oppression that occurs in the unjust situation in which we find ourselves and seek not only what is below but seek that which is above. Do not become conformists because Christians also know how to engage in the struggle. The struggle, however, is stronger and more courageous when it is inspired by Christ who knew how to turn the other cheek and allowed himself to be nailed to the cross. Jesus obedient unto death has redeemed the world and now we sing the hymn of his definitive victory, a victory that cannot be used for other objectives by those who do not look toward him for the true liberation of humankind.

This is the liberation that is only understood in light of the Risen Christ. My dear sisters and brothers, you who have so much social sensitivity, you who cannot tolerate this unjust situation in our land --- this is good. God has given you that sensitivity, and if you have a call to political activism, God be blessed. Develop it. But look: do not waste that call; do not waste that political and social sensitivity on earthly hatred, vengeance, and violence. Lift up your hearts! Look at the things above!

The great illuminator, the great inspirer of all earthly liberation movements is not a mere man or some ideology or even less, some form of atheism, rather it is God, it is Christ. The great inspirer of the liberation of our people and country is the only liberator: the Risen Christ --- the Christ of whom this morning we sing hymns of true victory over all the earth's oppression; Christ who now reigns in the glory of the Father, Christ who challenged the power of Pontius Pilate and the Roman empire; Christ who challenged the religious fanaticism of Israel and the priests and saw their religion as a perversion of its original meaning. The Risen Christ challenges all the liberators of this world and tells them: *You are not going to liberate anyone!* There is only one liberation and that is the liberation that unchains the hearts of men and women and frees them from sin and selfishness. Liberation resides in the One who tore the veil of death and hell, the One who has left the empty tomb and now invites all people to die contented. In this way, when the hour of universal resurrection arrives, all people will be able to challenge the tombs in our cemeteries: *Where, O death is your victory?* (10).

Everything else dies, everything else is sin, everything else is hatred and violence and blood and assassinations and abductions. None of this is liberation and all of this is buried among the old things that Christ has left behind in order to give us the gift of new life which can only be lived by a true Christian. Hopefully, the fanatics of violence and terrorism and those who believe that repression and power are going to resolve our problems, hopefully all these people will see that these are not the ways of the Lord. Indeed the way of the Lord is the humble way of Christ who respected, loved and was obedient to the law of the Lord and who now gifts humankind with true liberation, thus people have the freedom to accept or reject this gift. Yes, Christ is the key to all of God's revelation.

### **The Church, the depository and witness of the resurrection**

The second thought of this Easter is to tell you with great gratitude that the Church, founded by Christ, is the depository and witness of the resurrection. Saint Peter, who for the first time confronts a group of non-believers, becomes a witness to the fact that *God shows no partiality*. The gift of faith is not offered exclusively to the people of Israel or the descendents of Abraham with whom God established a covenant. The risen Christ has broken down the barriers that separate people from one another and from God. Baptism, a gift of Christian redemption, can be offered to the Romans and non-believers. We hear in the beautiful sermon that was proclaimed earlier: *We are witnesses of all that he [Jesus] did... He commissioned us to preach to the people and testify that he is the one appointed by God as judge of the living and the dead. To him all the prophets bear witness, that everyone who believes in him will receive forgiveness of sins through his name* (11). In other words, this Christ, who received from the Father the promised inheritance of the numerous covenants of the Old Testament and, with his resurrection and the gift of eternal life, makes all of this a reality, established a Church that was founded on the testimony of people who were witnesses of this resurrection.

Peter and John had run to the tomb and seen that it was empty. But more important than the empty tomb, and more important than the encounter with Mary of Magdala, is the fact that the Apostles were inspired by the Holy Spirit who confirmed them in their faith in the Risen One. Christ lives! Christ is not dead! Christ is the judge of the living and the dead! Christ forgives the sins of men and women! The resurrection has ratified and placed God's seal on Christ's power to forgive those who repent of their sins. We are witnesses of all this. (12) The apostles connect up with the prophets. We can understand why Jeremias, Isaiahs,

the prophets of the Old Testament maintained their hope which, for three apostles, was no longer hope but reality to share with the people who believed in Jesus Christ.

The Church is the institution Christ founded to dispense officially the gifts of his redemption. How blessed are we to be part of the Church at this time. We have seen Pope Paul VI gather the bishops from the whole world to address the issue of evangelization. Then the bishops of Latin America met in Puebla and John Paul II left Rome and journeyed to Latin America to proclaim a message concerning the evangelization of our continent. In this way the Church continues to be faithful to the mandate that she has received from Christ. The Church today is the same Church of Peter and John and the first Apostles and the first Christian communities that were proclaimed in the readings this morning. Your Church and mine, the Church of 1979, is the same Church as those first men and women. Today our Church is very concerned that her evangelizing message becomes a reality in the present and the future of Latin America.

How can we help people not only to listen to the Word of God but also to receive the sacramental signs: Baptism, Confession, the Eucharist, Marriage blessed by God, Priestly Ordination --- that is, the seven Sacraments that are expressions of the Covenant relationship between God and the people? Through these signs people receive the forgiveness, life and grace that Jesus brought and gave us at the tremendous cost of the cross. All of this is evangelization. My dear sisters and brothers, Catholics of 1979, never before has the Church been so aware of her evangelizing mission. Never before has the Church understood so clearly that evangelization involves the preaching of the Word and the proclamation of the Good News that Christ has established the Kingdom of God on earth. People respond to this proclamation when they ask for forgiveness and confess their sins, when they ask the Church to bless their marriages, when they are baptized and confirmed.

The sacraments are indispensable in affirming our acceptance of Jesus' covenant. The sacraments, like the Word, are links that make firm this covenant between God and humankind. We cannot call ourselves Catholic if we do not receive the sacraments and we cannot receive the sacraments worthily if we are not attentive to the Word of God. It is in light of this that our pastors and priests have understood the need to evangelize before administering the sacraments. Before Baptism is administered parents are prepared. Young people are prepared to receive the sacrament of Confirmation and this sacrament is no longer conferred upon large numbers of people who do not understand the meaning of this sacrament. At the same time, people are prepared before receiving the sacraments of Matrimony, Eucharist and Reconciliation.

The Word of God is necessary to understand this key in order that later the celebration of the sacraments can be understood (the same thing occurs when one learns a new language). We only understand people when we learn their language. People may speak very beautiful words to us, but if we do not understand their language, we do not know what they are saying. The same occurs with the sacraments: they are a language of signs. But those who do not understand or have not learned this language are like those who hear the words of a language but have no understanding of what is being said. Thus there are people who do not understand the meaning of the water that is poured over one's forehead in the sacrament of Baptism; they do not understand the meaning of the laying on of hands and the anointing that takes place during the sacrament of Confirmation; they do not understand the extension of the priests' hands when he says: *I absolve you from your sins*. My dear sisters and brothers, let us realize that the Church of today, aware of her responsibility to offer this redemption, wants

to begin this task by speaking with people in the common language that Christ used when he taught. The Church wants people to understand and enter into solidarity and become a part of this Covenant with the Lord.

The Church has received these gifts of the resurrection to share them and not maintain them in her possession in some exclusive way. Let us open our hearts so that we might affirm the words of Vatican II: *Outside the Church there are many elements of truth and grace which belong to Christ the Redeemer. Those also can attain to salvation who though no fault of their own do not know the Gospel of Christ, 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 their conscience* (13). My sisters and brothers, who knows whether they will be saved with more merit than we who possess the fullness of the means of salvation. We are Catholic not because of our own merits but because of the grace of God. Faith is a gift of God.

Like Christ, we might say: *How many people long to see the day of the Lord and have not seen it?* (14) How many non-believers love Jesus and respect the Church more than we? How many obey their pastors much better than we do as Catholics? There are many Catholics who believe they have a right to possess private property and view the Church as their property? The Church, however, is no one's property. It belongs to God and God will give it to whomever he pleases. He can also take it away from those who do not appreciate this gift. How many within the Catholic Church are not really Catholic? As the Council says: *They remain in the bosom of the Church, but, as it were, only in a "bodily" manner and not "in their heart"* (15). On the other hand, how many are outside the Church, and yet their hearts are with us?

Let us understand this great truth of the redemption of the Risen Lord, namely, redemption moves beyond the borders of the Church. As Catholics we do not have a monopoly on Jesus or the Holy Spirit. Christ and the Spirit do not allow themselves to be monopolized or molded. Rather they seek out people with sincere hearts. We have just prayed: You extended your hand to *all who seek you with a sincere heart.*<sup>1</sup> What a great comfort! Who will be saved? Those who with a sincere heart seek the Lord. It is not enough to belong to or to come to Church. It is not enough to be baptized if one does not understand the meaning of Baptism. Do not be self-satisfied because you are a friend of such and such a bishop or priest. This will not save you. Only those who with a sincere heart seek the Lord will be saved. This is the Church that is the depository and the witness of the resurrection.

Therefore, my sisters and brothers, we who have had the privilege of knowing the true Church of Jesus Christ, let us accept the responsibility that comes from receiving this grace that the Lord has given us. Like the Apostles who felt compelled to proclaim the Good News wherever they went, let us also be witnesses of the resurrection. Christ has died for the forgiveness of sins. Repent and be converted! How blessed will be that day when all of us -- bishops and priests and religious, all the laity, those who are married, professionals, people at work in factories, all the baptized, --- like the first Christians, give witness to this faith in Christ the Redeemer.

### **Christians, participants in the same Spirit that raised Jesus to new life**

I have come to my third point: Christians who share in the same Spirit that resurrected Christ. What an honor! The Holy Spirit who led Christ and gave divine value to his death on the cross, this Spirit and power of God that raised Jesus from the dead, is the same Spirit that

is given to all the baptized, to all those who form the Mystical Body, to all those who form the People of God. Saint Paul says that this Spirit, even though it appears invisible yet as we walk toward old age, illness and death and burial, *Just as in Adam all die, so too in Christ shall all be brought to life... the last enemy to be destroyed is death*. One day the tombs in our cemeteries will be opened and death will be astounded. Like the wonderful painting of Michael the archangel that depicts him at the time of the Final Judgment with a skull that has been given an expression of surprise. The skulls themselves are surprised when they see that everyone escapes death. This is the gospel proclamation that cries out: *Where, O death is your victory?* (16).

The Risen Christ is the first among us to be raised to life. He is the first among the living who will not die again. Like him, we now possess his Spirit, and even though we suffer and die, we bear within ourselves the seed of eternal life. Jesus said: *those who believe in me will never die* (17). We bear within ourselves the Spirit of the Risen Jesus.

This Spirit that raised up Jesus is the strength and holiness of all the earth. I have always preached to you about eschatology. My sisters and brothers, I told you that eschatology refers to the final things and is the ultimate perspective of history. We do not have to wait, however, until the end of time to live with this eschatological perspective. It is like one who walks halfway toward the goal and thus has this goal in mind as he continues the journey. Because of this eschatological goal we walk with hope and confidence and we know where this road will lead us. This is exactly what the risen Christ has done: he has inserted the eternal dimensions of his life into the flow of human history, in the midst of these things that come and go. Christ, raised to new life and never more to die, is part of this world. Blessed are those who know how to give an eschatological meaning to their life. This means that we look toward the Risen Christ as the goal toward which we walk. With all our weaknesses and trials and desires for liberation, if we remain united with Christ, then we cannot fail. Christ gives strength and Spirit to this struggle for a better world.

Therefore I repeat: we do not want to discredit the efforts of Christians when they become part of these different liberation movements that neither believe in God or Christ. But do not allow yourselves to be deceived, for as Christians you possess a power that is stronger than any political group or organization that only looks at the things of this earth. If you look toward Christ and struggle from this Christian perspective, then politics, sociology and economics will recover their Christian power. But the Church does not identify herself with any of these powers. Rather she inspires these forces and tells people to continue the struggle and never lose this perspective that she points out.

Therefore I do not identify myself with any of you because I want to maintain myself free to point out this eschatology that will always find something else to criticize in the plans of human beings. The great plan of God is not realized on this earth, rather the Kingdom of God illuminates the earth and the kingdoms of this world, thanks to Christians who bear the Spirit of Christ and work as Christians. Allow me to make a suggestion: those Christians and those who belong to base communities of faith, if the time comes when you no longer believe it is worthwhile to read the Bible or to belong to this community group, if the time comes when you want to become a member of another organization because it is the only way that you can work for the country, then you are deceived. Perhaps it is better to say you are confused. Do not be confused! The Church always points out a valid goal for every organization, namely, that which is just. She also rejects that which is unjust, criminal or evil.

So I ask you: why are Christians not more inventive? If you possess the plan of the Kingdom of Heaven and the faith of the Risen Christ and King, why have you become slaves to the ideologies of this world? Why do you believe Christianity is less valuable than politics? Why do you lack the courage to give a Christian meaning to your organization? Why do you become slaves to others? Why have you put aside your leadership abilities, a leadership that Jesus raised on high? Why have you allowed yourselves to be burdened? Do not humiliate yourselves! Proclaim that you are liberators and not slaves! Proclaim the fact that you labor for the just demands of the people and do not allow yourselves to become subject to others! Christians are the greatest rebels that exist because they do not submit themselves to any earthly ideology but possess the great freedom of the liberator, Jesus Christ.

The time has come and our country needs many liberators, but liberators that proclaim true liberations. Paul VI said: *The Church provides Christian liberators with the inspiration of faith, the motivation of fraternal love, and a social teaching which... they must make the foundation of their wisdom and their experience...* (18).

### **Life of the Church**

My sisters and brothers, this Church, the depository of the treasures of Redemption and a faithful witness of the Risen Christ, is not an abstract Church. I like to think that the Church that I always speak of is you. You and I, with our hopes and defects, we are the community of the Church. I am pleased to believe that the Church which I preach is not an abstract Church, a Church in the clouds, but a Church that journeys with her feet on the ground. It is this Church that has lived many beautiful events during this Holy Week.

For example, the Pope on Palm Sunday said that power should not be abused.<sup>2</sup> And when he preached during the Stations of the Cross in the Roman Coliseum, he invited the Church to live in solidarity with the martyrs of our era.<sup>3</sup> We have martyrs. Let us always remember our priests and catechists and people of faith who were accused of being subversives and involved in politics and then tortured and murdered. God alone knows the faith of those who offered their lives. As the Pope has pointed out, let us live in solidarity with them. Let us be that Church that imitates Christ, the Lord, and remain faithful even in martyrdom.

During this Holy Week, the Church has seen many wonderful manifestations. From this central Cathedral of the Diocese, I want to greet and thank all those priests and religious men and women, laity and catechists, young men and women and university students who organized these missions and visited the towns and villages. I want to thank all those who made this wonderful celebration of Holy Week possible. Here in the Cathedral, only God can measure the great devotion that has been manifested during this Holy Week. I can only measure this by your presence here in the Cathedral and I tell you: your presence has enriched my faith. While here in the Cathedral I reflected on the great multitude of people who followed the images of Jesus and the saints and walked the Way of the Cross and participated in the celebrations that recall the love of Christ who redeems us.

During this Holy Week, the Church is saddened by the secularism of so many people. For some, Holy Week is simply a time for business, vacation and rest. This may very well be justified and I am not going to condemn anyone here. I am simply referring to those secularists who see no value in any of the Church's actions. I am not speaking about those



who have had to leave because of family obligation or the need for some rest and whose vacation has allowed them to reflect and grow in faith. I greet all of you.

I am also saddened by the fanaticism of certain traditions that are opposed to the pastoral lines of action of the Diocese. The Christian communities must be very careful. There are people determined to maintain traditions that are not legitimate traditions because they are opposed to a Church that wants to be a living expression of Christ's redemption.

I am also saddened by the abuses of those imprudent innovations that do not take into consideration the legitimate sentiments of our people. Even worse, if by chance this has occurred, are those persons who took advantage of the manifestations of faith during Holy Week to seek their own political or limited objectives. The Church will have no part in this. The processions are not organized to achieve some political objective. We have stated several times and it must be understood that the Church has her own language. If you do not understand this language, at least respect it and do not use her language for other objectives. I say this to those on the left and the right. The Church supports no one except Christ and calls everyone to follow this true Christ.

Therefore it is necessary to evaluate our pastoral action during this time. My beloved priests, through the various pastoral organizations, we must evaluate the events of Holy Week and preserve what is good and continue to search for new expressions. We must purify our actions of anything that is not Christian, purify them of illegitimate traditions or innovations that might disturb the language of our Church. Help us in this effort. Those who have participated in the Holy Week celebrations in the villages and towns and feel that there has been some defect, send us a report so that we can analyze the celebration of Holy Week in the Diocese and give these celebrations a true Christian meaning.

I want to speak with you a little more because while we have been concerned about our liturgical celebrations, we have also had the opportunity to establish relationships that have given us new strength. For example, a Congressman from the United States has visited us. He is a very gracious collaborator in the defense of human rights. He witnessed the interference that took place during our radio broadcasts and the extreme measures that some people will take against us. He saw that the Church is involved in a struggle among unequal entities and that there are those who want to silence the Church and do not have the courage to confront us directly and challenge our views or allow us to challenge them. I lament the fact that our radio station has been unable to broadcast our messages to the people. The people are the ones who have lost the most. On the other hand, I believe the Church has gained much as a result of this interference. Therefore, I tell you that you were right in combating this situation where attitudes of disloyalty have dishonored those who have had recourse to these means. This is an abuse of the right to free expression.

Therefore, I want to exhort you, my beloved Christians, and I have said this before: a time may come when we no longer have our newspaper or radio station. In that case we must rely upon every Catholic to become the Lord's witness. We have spoken about this earlier today. Each of you must become a microphone that speaks loudly and a newspaper that is shared. Do not be afraid but courageous in your proclamation. When the media silences our voice, then Catholics must communicate the Good News. We do not have the right to keep the News to ourselves, rather we announce this News so that the world might be saved. These threats of interference can be signs of worse things that are to come. Hopefully this is not true but we must be prepared to be witnesses to the truth. I have been told that since

8:15am this morning we have been unable to broadcast our program. The interference continues.

This Congressman was able to visit the marginal zones of our city and realized that the Church is involved in a struggle that attempts to discredit us before the nation and hide the truth of what is occurring in our country. He later spoke to me these words that made me very proud: *despite the great distance that separates us, I feel that I am a member of this Diocese.* He has also promoted my nomination for the Nobel Prize in the United States Congress.<sup>4</sup>

On this occasion I also want to express my gratitude for the solidarity that the Belgian Parliament offered to my candidacy for the Nobel Prize.<sup>5</sup> Also 800 Christian from 43 Dioceses in Mexico expressed their solidarity with the pastoral lines of action of this Diocese and my candidacy for the Nobel Prize. I do not see this as some kind of personal honor but rather an international support that defends the Church of the Archdiocese and the true human values of our people.

I was very pleased to receive the following letter for the Episcopal Conference in Holland. The letter stated: *My dear brother, we have received here the news of the many difficulties that you confront in the area of social justice and the defense of human life. This has caused great concern to the Catholic people of Holland and the Episcopal Conference. At the same time, we have heard great praise for your courage and authentic pastoral activity that has enabled you, as Pastor of this Church, to respond to this very sad situation. We believe that it is our obligation and, at the same time, a sign of our brotherhood, to write this letter and offer you our support for your pastoral ministry on behalf of the most poor, abandoned and unjustly treated. Be assured of our love, prayers, moral support and even material support if in this sense you have some urgent need. We have no doubt that you will be able to use those means that are most wise and prudent as you confront this most unfavorable situation. Receive our fraternal greeting and our prayers for God's blessing. The Episcopal Conference of Holland, (signed) Cardinal Jean Wilebrands.*

During this Holy Week, besides the consolation that Christ gives us in his passion, we received the support of 20,572 letters, signed by Christians in Europe and attached to a petition called, *The Abolishment of Torture.*<sup>6</sup> Among those who signed this petition were the Auxiliary Bishop of Avignon, the Auxiliary Bishop of Paris and the Bishop of Ajaccio.

This Church which is today celebrating the Lord's resurrection belongs to SEDAC, the Bishops' Secretariat for Central America, which will be holding its annual meeting in Costa Rica during Easter week. I am happy to be meeting many brothers of the Central American hierarchy and ask your prayers that this meeting may help all our churches in the region.

### **Events of the week**

The Church encourages a revision of the labor laws of the country so that ambiguous cases, such as that of ADOC which has resulted in so many abuses and deaths, might be defined in a way that is favorable to all those who are involved in the area of work: owners as well as workers.<sup>7</sup>

Amnesty International has requested the Security Council of the United Nations to intervene and bring a halt to political assassinations throughout the world. Sadly, El Salvador was among the countries that were mentioned by this International Organization.

As a man and a Christian, I want to express my sorrow for this crime of political assassination which we hear about every day on the radio and read about in our newspapers. We see this occurring every day in Iran. During Holy Week violence has escalated in Nicaragua. As we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, we lift up our prayers with the hope that all people will come to understand one another without the shedding of blood.

On this day of the Resurrection, this feast of liberty and freedom, I once again cry out with the Church and with so many families who are suffering: give us some information about the 118 people who have “disappeared”. They are our sisters and brothers. On this day of the Resurrection I also cry out for the freedom of the two Englishmen who were abducted.<sup>8</sup> If they are still alive --- and I hope that they are --- then give them the gift that Jesus purchased for us with such great suffering, give them freedom.

A number of cases were brought to my attention in a beautiful letter from Arcatao. Concrete cases of abuse were outlined. I am unable to share this information with you because I gave the letter to the Congressman from North America. Therefore, I ask the person who wrote this letter to please send me another copy.

My dear sisters and brothers, it is clear that the resurrection of Christ is the seal and the key of the Covenant between God and humankind. If Christ has been raised then the Father, who loves us in Christ, will continue to protect us. Our people, who place their trust in Christ, will not be deceived. As we celebrate this Easter in the midst of blood, sorrow, misunderstandings, hatred and violence, we have no reason to become pessimistic even though it might be necessary to suffer like Christ on the cross and feel his loneliness: *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* (19). Jesus never lost his love for the Father and placed all his trust in the Father. The hour had not arrived, but three days after his death, after the apparent abandonment of the Father, God responded in a better way, much better than freeing Jesus from the cross and suffering and thus not allowing him to die. Christ is made glorious when he has assumed the triumph of the resurrection.

If we learn how to accept and integrate the trials and sufferings of life into the hope of our own resurrection, then the time of resurrection will come not only for ourselves as individuals, but also for our beloved nation and homeland. Alleluia.

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<sup>1</sup> *Roman Missal*, Eucharistic Prayer IV.

<sup>2</sup> See *La Prensa Gráfica*, 9 April 1979.

<sup>3</sup> See Allocution of John Paul II after the Way of the Cross (15 April 1979), *Osservatore Romano*, 22 April 1979.

<sup>4</sup> Mr Tom Harpin is one of 23 members of the US Congress who proposed Mons. Romero for the Nobel Peace Prize on 27 January 1979 as had done 118 British Members of Parliament in November 1978. See *Orientación*, 4 February 1979.

<sup>5</sup> See letter of Jules Pollé, president of *Entreaide et Fraternité* (Brussels), *Orientación*, 8 April 1979.

<sup>6</sup> A letter from Christian Action for the Abolition of Torture (ACAT), supported by Mons Raymond Bouchex, Archbishop of Avignon, Mons Daniel Pezeril, Auxiliary Bishop of Paris, and Mons Jean Charles Thomas, Bishop of Ajaccio. See *Orientación*, 8 April 1979.

<sup>7</sup> See *La Crónica del Pueblo*, 9 April 1979.

<sup>8</sup> Ian Cameron Massie and Michael Chatterton, manager and assistant manager of the Bank of London and South America, kidnapped on 30 November 1978.

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*Marginal References* (1) Jn 20,8-9; (2) Jn 17,1; (3) Mk 9,31-32; (4) Ac 10,38-39; (5) DV 4; (6) Mt 27,64; (7) Ph 2,9-10; (8) Col 3,1; (9) Col 3,1; (10) 1Cor 15,55; (11) Ac 10,39,42-43; (12) Ac 10,39; (13) LG 16; (14) Mt 13,17; (15) LG 14; (16) 1Cor 15,55; (17) Jn 11,25-26; (18) EN 38; (19) Mk 15,34.