

## THE EUCHARIST: CHRIST'S PRESENCE IN HISTORY

**Feast of Corpus Christi**  
**June 17, 1979**

*Exodus 24:3-8*

*Hebrews 9:11-15*

*Mark 14:12-16, 22-26*

My dear sisters and brothers.

It is most opportune that we honor the body and blood of the Son of Man when there are so many abuses of the body and blood among us. In this celebration of our faith when we honor the presence of the body and the blood of Christ that was shed for us, I want to remember the blood that is shed by the many persons who are massacred in our country, in our sister republic of Nicaragua and in the whole world. Without any doubt Christ gathers up this blood each time that this mystery is celebrated: *This is my Body ... this is my Blood of the new covenant that was established by God and that is now poured out for the forgiveness of all the world.*(1) Unfortunately not all the blood that is shed is holy like that of Jesus' but all blood is sacred and everybody is immolated even though this may occur because of assassination when life is cut short. Every life is sacred.

Therefore our homage of the body, the body of the Lord, does not end with a man killed as a result of the world's injustice, does not end with being nailed to the cross. Three days later this body is raised up gloriously as a sign of the triumph of the sacrifice of the blood that was shed. Therefore we want to unite with this homage to the body of Christ the hope of all those who died for an ideal --- the hopes of those homes and widows and orphans who are suffering as a result of the assassinations and the violent deaths. We say to all of you: *The Body of Christ that we venerate today on the altar --- dead but raised up to new life --- is marked with the signs of torture and injustice and assassination in the glory of the resurrection. This tortured but resurrected body cries out before the sin of the world for the eternal justice of God.* Nothing remains hidden and everything will be restored to justice, everything will have its place.

This homage to the body of Christ is most opportune. Like all the feasts of the Church we ought to apply this celebration to the concrete and practical situations of our history. The liturgical feasts are not remembrances of past events or celebrations of abstract realities. The liturgical feasts, like the gospels, are preached and incarnated in reality even though at times the reality might be painful, embarrassing, harsh, and cruel but these are the realities that Christ raises up in order to redeem and sanctify them.

What do we celebrate on this feast of Corpus Christi? We celebrate the dogma of Catholics, the faith that has brought us here together to celebrate Mass on this Sunday. Hopefully each day all of us deepen our faith at the moment when the priest in front of the assembly gathered together in the Cathedral or in the humble towns and villages pronounces the words that we heard proclaimed in today's gospel: *Take and eat, this is my body; this is my blood of the covenant which will be shed for many for the forgiveness of sin* (2). Then the

elements are raised up and the people, either standing as a sign of respect or on knee as a sign of adoration, affirm that before their eyes, under the appearance of bread and wine is the body and the blood of Christ, truly, really and substantially present.

It is a living presence and a life giving presence. The presence of Christ in the Eucharist has two aspects. The first aspect is a presence as a victim and as a sacrifice. The sacrifice of Christ on the cross becomes real and present in every Mass that is celebrated. The second aspect is communion. The nourishment that Christ gives us is love, one bread. It is like the family setting where a mother, even though poor, breaks the bread and shares this one bread with her children who are seated around the family table of unity. The altar is the place of sacrifice and is also the family table. The altar of the Cathedral and of any other church where we worship is adorned with flowers, incensed, covered the luxurious cloths because it represents Christ. Christ becomes present during the Mass in the bread and the wine. The victim gathers up the sacrifice of all people and offers this sacrifice to God. Communion then is the call of love that is extended to all people to form one single family, the family of God that is nourished by the body of the blood of the heavenly Lamb, the bread that came down to earth.

So I propose for the theme of our reflection today: *The Eucharist: the living and life-giving presence of Christ in history*. This is the meaning of Eucharist, the living presence and the life giving presence of Christ in person here in history. The primary and most important person who is present during the Mass is Christ on the altar. Therefore each time that we come to Mass it is he, Jesus Christ, whom we come to hear and follow and love. I will develop the following points in my homily: First, the Eucharist: the fullness and the fulfillment of the old covenants; Second, the Eucharist, the beginning and the sign of the Kingdom of God among all people; Third, the Eucharist, the inspiration and power of our eschatological hope, a hope that is greater than that which is present in our hearts at this time, a hope that is nourished by Christ present in our history.

### **The Eucharist, fullness and fulfillment of the old covenants**

In the first place, today's readings invite us to reflect on an interesting comparison. The Eucharist is present in the first reading from the Old Testament and the two readings from the New Testament as a sacrament that Christ establishes to perfect, to complete and fulfill the meaning of the old covenants. It is moving to consider that here today in our Cathedral it is as though we were in the upper room and Jesus raises up the bread over the altar and proclaims to us the words of today's gospel: *Take it, this is my body* (3). Then the chalice of the Mass that is presented by the people during the procession of gifts and which contains a little grape wine is transformed by Christ through the ministry of priest and presented to the people: *Take, this is my blood of the covenant which will be shed for the forgiveness of all people* (4). The Blood of the covenant! For so many centuries these words of the Lord have been spoken!

This year throughout Lent those who have followed the lines of our catechesis will remember that we enumerated the different covenants that marked various phases of salvation history. First we had the period of pre-history and the covenant with Noah under the sign of the rainbow. The second covenant was established with Abraham and marks the period of the patriarchs. Finally we reflected on the era of Moses and the covenant of Sinai. We are reminded of this event in the first reading: from Moses to Jesus is an era of the great promise that was made to the people that came into existence at the foot of Mount Sinai and this

promise is fulfilled on another mountain, on Calvary, where the blood of Christ is poured out for people and not the blood of animals like those that Moses offered on the altar

What was the covenant established with Moses? It was a ratification of the love of God who chose a nation from among all the nations to make his people. The people of that nation, through Moses, said to God: *We will do everything that the Lord has told us* (5). The elements of the covenant: blood, the seat of life. In order to ratify the love of God who chose a people and who in turn accepted this decision of God, Moses, the reading tells us: *erected at the foot of the mountain an altar and twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel* (6). What follows is something wonderful, Moses sent the young men to kill the victims that were going to be offered to God.(7) The blood is then gathered together in large bowls and divided into two parts because a blood covenant is made between two parties. The altar represents the divine element and therefore half the blood is poured over the altar. The people represent the other party of the covenant. The people had been chosen and agreed to be called the People of God. Thus Moses read the Law of God to the people and the people responded: *All that the Lord has said, we will heed and do* (8) and the rite that seals the covenant is the rite of blood. Moses took the other part of the blood and initiated the rite of aspersion: *May this blood fall upon the people* (9). For the Israelites and throughout the Bible blood represents the seat of life. It is for this reason that I said today it is beautiful to gather up all the blood that has been shed, the lives of so many people laid to waste on our soil, life thrown away even in the sewers and drain pipes, life that is given no consideration. This blood is gathered up to affirm the covenant between God and people because blood is the seat of life. Moses sprinkled the altar and the people in order to show that there was a vital communion that joins together God and the people. The people of God had been reconciled through the sacrifice of victims. The death of the animals represents the holocaust of the people and thus through the killing of some poor animals the people ask forgiveness of God. Today the Bible calls this the sacrifice of communion, the sacrifice of reconciliation. The sprinkling of the altar and the people is the sacrifice of communion, the sacrifice of life with God and the twelve columns that represent the Israelite community also represents the blood that unites all of them in one love, in one family, thus giving birth to the People of God. This is a symbolic gesture of the old covenant that was culminated on Mount Sinai.

The old covenant was a sign of things to come and therefore the covenant of Sinai, even though it was grandiose, nonetheless, it was limited and provisional and imperfect. Yes, it was a limited covenant, limited to the people of Israel. Provisional because the prophets were charged with deciphering the signs and proclaiming a new covenant that would have a profound and universal character. It was imperfect because it was only a legal purification, external and ritualistic.

Therefore the second reading compares the old covenant with the new covenant. In fact this is the theme of the letter to the Hebrews. This letter was written to encourage the Jewish people who had converted to Christianity. The Jewish converts to Christianity remembered their tradition that went back to Moses, their temple in Jerusalem, the ceremonies of the priests, the holocausts on their altars and all of this represented a dangerous nostalgia in light of their Christian commitment to a new religion that was being persecuted, had no temples or luxuriously clothed priests. In fact the persecutions made many of these converts put aside their Christian commitment and return to the practice of the Mosaic Law. The letter to the Hebrews is written to this group of people and states that no matter how luxurious the temple of Jerusalem, regardless of the tradition of the Mosaic Rite, all of this is imperfect in comparison to the sacrifice of Christ.

The wonderful Biblical passage today (11) presents us the High and Eternal Priest clothed anew and passing through the more perfect tabernacle not made by human hands and not carrying the blood that Moses sprinkled over the people, the blood of animals, the sprinkling of a heifer's ashes but rather bringing his own blood and entering into the infinite sanctuary of heaven. The blood of Moses was a sign while the blood of Jesus is real. The sacrifice of Sinai did not have the power to purify the conscience or cleanse people of their sins while Jesus is the immaculate Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. (12)

The liberation that Moses offered was a freedom from Egypt, the Exodus event, a beautiful page that describes the liberation of the people but this is only a temporal liberation.(13) The people departed from Egypt and journeyed to the Promised Land. On the other hand the Bible tells us today that the great liberation that Christ, impelled by the Holy Spirit, offers us an eternal liberation.(14) It is a liberation that removes the chains of sin and hell, uproots from the world every form of slavery and injustice and allows the Church to effectively preach the redemption of humankind, redemption for those who accept this gift of salvation. Those who wish to join a different liberation movement are free to do so but let your participation in these movements be effective. There are others who wish to separate themselves from these movements because of the sin of the abuse of power. Therefore it should not appear to be strange that the Church shares in this liberating power and communicates it to those human groups who seek the just demands of the people and also reproaches that which is evil in these human groups especially when they become abusive in seeking just demands.

The Church confronts those who are not pleased that there are people struggling against injustice and is on the side of those who cry out against the abuse of power, the abuse of the economy, abuse that is sinful. The Church cries out against sin wherever it is found because she is the power of Christ who with the Holy Spirit gives true freedom and proclaims the autonomy and independence of the Kingdom of God in the midst of the world. The Church is not concerned about being on the good side of anyone but is only concerned about the freedom of people and being on the good side of God. Thus the Church wants to offer to God women and men who have been completely freed from everything that enslaves them.

The letter to the Hebrews tells us this when the cult of the new covenant is compared with the cult of the old covenant of Sinai. The *corpus* comes into the world to take up the spirit of this letter to the Hebrews. At this Mass and this afternoon at 4:00pm we behold the principal celebrant of this gathering, Christ the Lord, the Eternal High Priest who leads the people along the paths of true Christian liberation.

### **The Eucharist, beginning and sign of the God's Kingdom among women and men**

This is why I say the Eucharist is the beginning and sign of God's Kingdom present among us. The Eucharist is based on the same foundation as the offering of Moses. On the night before his death, when his blood would be shed, Jesus left us in the chalice the same blood that would be poured forth on Good Friday: *This is my blood, the blood of the covenant* (15). Now we are no longer dealing with a bowl filled with the blood of animals but the blood of the very veins of the God-man who came to be a holocaust for the world. The letter to the Hebrew refers to Christ as *the mediator of a new covenant* (16). How beautiful is this Catholic idea! Each Sunday at every Mass in which we participate we gather together in the chalice on our altars all the love, sorrow, merit --- the whole sacrifice of Christ which

reminds us of the useless sacrifices of antiquity and demonstrates the efficacy of the redeeming sacrifice of the cross: *Do this in memory of me* (17).

How pleased I am to be able to say to the Lord: *Look, Lord, at how many people remember you. Look at this Cathedral, look at the many churches of the Diocese and throughout the world, churches in humble villages and towns, groups of people all coming to Mass.* Today people have come to the Cathedral, people from San José de la Montaña, along so many roads, small groups of people. I am filled with emotion when I think that what I am saying here is heard by people who have come to make a covenant with the sign and the beginning of a new world, a kingdom of God that is only lived by those Catholics who have true faith in Christ the Redeemer.

The Eucharist is the presence of the paschal mystery of Christ. Thus when the priest raises the host and says: *Let us proclaim the mystery of faith!* you reply what you sense within: *Christ has died! Christ is risen!* This is the Eucharist: a proclamation of the Lord's death, a proclamation of his eternal life, optimism of men and women who know that they are following the bright light of Christ, the eternal light, and following Christ even amid the darkness and confusion of our history.

Christ, once risen, has placed in the world the seed of a new world. The Vatican Council states: (18) *although it does not actually include all men, and at times may look like a small flock, is nonetheless a lasting and sure seed of unity, hope and salvation for the whole human race. Established by Christ as a communion of life, charity and truth, it is also used by Him as an instrument for the redemption of all, and is sent forth into the whole world as the light of the world and the salt of the earth.* At this time I feel that you and I are becoming aware of the power and the energy of this nucleus of salvation and unity. When we leave Mass, we ought to go out the way Moses descended Mount Sinai: with his face shining, with his heart brave and strong to face the world's difficulties. One of the Holy Fathers said: *like lions who have eaten fire.* How wonderful would be the Christian unity of lions who had eaten fire and who go through the world nourished by this fire of love that is Christ! How wonderful would it be to see people move through the world and not be afraid to proclaim their faith but proud to proclaim their faith as the only way to salvation! Christians who were willing to take a stand and say this is true and everything else is a lie, this is justice and these other realities are dishonorable and unjust. The Christian wears the sureness of Christ and is the seed of salvation. If there is hope of a new world, of a new nation, of a more just order, of a reflection of God's kingdom in our society, then my sisters and brothers, surely you Christians are the ones who will bring about this wonder of a new world, but only when we are really communicators of the life that we come to receive in the Eucharist at our Sunday Mass, communicators of the seed that will transform the world.

### **Events of the week**

My sisters and brothers it is for this reason that I insist that our preaching, our life together as Christians in El Salvador in 1979, shares in the eternal Christian life of Moses and Christ and the apostles and therefore like them has to pertain to our own situation and our own time. It makes me sad to think that some people do not evolve and change. They say: *everything the Church does today is wrong because it isn't the way we did things as children.* They think back to their school days and long for a static Christianity, one that preserves things, like a museum. Christianity is not like that, and neither is the gospel. It has to be the leaven of the present time. It must not just point out the sins of the time of Moses and Egypt nor of the time of Christ and Pilate and Herod and the Roman Empire, but the sins of today,

here in El Salvador, the ones that we are forced to live among in these actual surroundings. We must be the seed of holiness and unity here amid the dreadful things that are going on among our own people, with whom we are in communion as a Church.

I received a telegram from the pastor in Las Flores, Chalatenango, who said on Friday: *Corpus Christi yesterday was packed. Everything well ordered and devout despite all the political turmoil. The campesinos preserve the ancient faith, rooted in devotions, thanks to God ... greetings ... sincerely.* I would say the same thing as was said about Las Flores because Thursday in various areas and today, Sunday, when the *corpus* here in the Cathedral is carried in procession at 4:00pm we will see Christian groups gathered together around the Eucharist. It is consoling to know that when we celebrate Mass on Sunday our churches are filled in all parts of the diocese. Someone told me that today more people are coming to Mass and I told this person that the community of the Archdiocese is taking on its own proper identity. Our Archdiocese has to be in harmony with the other dioceses of the world but also has its own identity that must be cultivated.

This Thursday Bishop Luis Chávez y González will celebrate his name day. The bishop is an outstanding figure in our Archdiocese. He served as Archbishop for thirty-seven years and has left us an inheritance --- you are that inheritance, you and your faith and your love for Christ. Let us thank the Lord and develop this inheritance.

Here in the community of the Archdiocese one of our beloved priests, the pastor of Santiago de María, Father José Abdón Arce, died and he will be buried this afternoon in Jucuapa.

Different communities have celebrated significant events. In San José de la Montaña a renewal of the parish leadership has taken place. We want to give this parish an identification with the seminary and with our vocational promotion. We want all of you to help us to give a more diocesan and ecclesial sense to the parish of San José de la Montaña and we will say more about this later.

Last Sunday in the parish of Divina Providencia, in Colonia Atlacatl, we celebrated the patronal feast. The Church was filled with people and I had the opportunity to explain the providential meaning of life: it does not mean laziness or passivity but rather that we collaborate with God who is provident and guides the world but depends on the collaboration of people.

In Soyapango we celebrated the feast of Saint Anthony and applied the message of this saint of the Middle Ages to the present day situation. This was a saint who because of his studies knew how to speak difficult truths in his time.

The Sisters of the Assumption are ministering in Colonia Morazán, a poor and marginated area. I was very happy to be able to confirm a group of young women and men there. What wonderful young people! After their catechetical preparation and a spiritual retreat they received the Holy Spirit and committed themselves to be docile instruments of the Holy Spirit in the world.

I had the opportunity to visit the Sara Home where the novices of the Oblate Sisters of the Sacred Heart are doing a great work of Christian love.

This Friday at 6:00pm we are going to celebrate the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Basilica Sagrado Corazón. This is not an outdated devotion but one that celebrates the love of Christ for humanity. In light of the demands of the times we must, therefore, be concerned about making actual this devotion and living out this love.

During the month of June we will be present in the marketplace with popular prayers and preaching because the priests will celebrate a mission in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. I am going to participate in this mission on Sunday July 10<sup>th</sup> at 11:00am at the Centro Ana Guerra, a center that promotes the lives of the women who work in the market. I will celebrate their Mass during the month of the Sacred Heart.

This Church had the opportunity to listen to the thoughts of the Church concerning the theme of birth control. Last Monday there was a round table discussion in the National University. My sisters and brothers, it is painful to think that the events that are occurring here in El Salvador are the punishment of God who castigated Babylon and Sodom and Gomorrah. During a discussion with doctors and technical experts from the hospital it became embarrassing to admit the reality that is occurring in our midst. As one medical student said and, forgive me for saying this: *they are castrating our people*. There is massive sterilization of women and men. Contraception materials are freely and shamelessly distributed with no fear of punishment. I implore you to reflect seriously on this matter because the source of life is as sacred as life itself and the relationship between woman and man, sanctified in matrimony, has a dual objective: to love one another and to enter into full and complete intimacy with one another not only for pleasure but also for procreation. Therefore the principle of the Church states that every conjugal act has to remain open to life and anything that disrupts life at its very source is a sin against nature.

I was with Father Guillermo Gibbons who is also a medical doctor and together with the World Health Organization he is carrying on a campaign to investigate natural methods. With doctors from other nations Father is certain that the experiences that they have studied have been successful in at least 98% of the cases. Why then would one sin by using artificial means to control conception when the diligence of the doctors was able to find natural means that God has placed in nature itself. From there we move into the criminal area of abortion. A doctor said that the medicines and other contraceptives were not as effective as abortion that has increased in our population. How can this be? If abortion becomes so shameless then how many abortions will take place in our country?

My sisters and brothers, this is a crime. If we experience repression when young women and men as well as adults are killed, then the same must also occur when life is removed from the womb of a woman. The life that is destroyed in a woman's womb is the same that occurs when a person is assassinated or when the Minister of Education is assassinated. When the child is aborted from the mother's womb, that child is also assassinated. If life is deprived of coming into existence because one is simply seeking pleasure, then this is also an assault on nature. I hope we all reflect on this and do all that we can so that there is no longer any sin in the world, so that God will bless us and so that God will remove us from this situation of injustice and disorder.

From the perspective of this community let us now look out toward the world and reflect on this celebration of Corpus Christi in the year 1979 and see it as the soul of the Church that is present in the world. I am happy to repeat here the words that John Paul II spoke as he departed Poland. He said to the President: *this visit has consumed all my energy*. Cardinal Wyszynski who was together with them responded: *But your holiness, your visit has given*

*strength to our country.* This is what it means to be a pastor in the Church: to give one's life so that the people might have life. As the Pope was leaving Poland he also spoke to the reporters and said: *When you provide information that is full, consistent, accurate, and true you enable every man and woman to be a partner in the business of the human race. Ideally, your lives are dedicated to the service of the truth. As long as you are faithful to that ideal, you are deserving of the respect and gratitude of every person.*<sup>1</sup> He reminded them of the exchange that took place between Jesus and Pilate when Jesus said: *I came into the world to testify to the truth* (20). The Pope said that the reporters should make their own this theme of Jesus as he stood before Pilate.<sup>2</sup> Before Pilate, before political threats, in face of the danger of losing some advantage, speak the truth! In face of the danger of being killed like Jesus, speak the truth! The reporter ought to be courageous like Jesus. For this reason you, reporters, are in the world, not to distort the news, not to be an instrument of partisan politics, not for selfish reasons, but you are in the world to speak the truth. When will we have reporters like this?

From the perspective of the Corpus Christi I would like to look at the sad situation in Nicaragua and I do this because it a reality. It is calculated that more than ten thousand people have died and every peaceful solution has been rejected. The bishops have issued a statement in which they outline the principles for legitimate revolt. *All of us are pained and affected by the extremes of revolutionary insurrections but we cannot deny their moral and legal legitimacy 'in the case of evident and prolonged tyranny that attacks the fundamental rights of the person and damages the common good of the country' (21).*<sup>3</sup> I believe that we have been very respectful of the hierarchy of every people when they [the hierarchy] have had to make judgments about their situations and we express our solidarity with them as they speak out about the autonomy and freedom of people and when they cry out against the abuses of an evident tyranny as well as the danger of abuse as a result of the reaction against the present tyranny. The Church can never be partial as long as there is danger of betraying Jesus' impartial message of justice, a message proclaimed to all people.

Therefore as I speak about Nicaragua and refer to their statement which you can read in our newspaper *Orientación* I also want to ask you, as sisters and brothers, to help your sisters and brothers who are hungry and in a very precarious situation. The day before yesterday I heard on radio a person who said: *Since Sunday I have not had anything to eat.* Imagine the anguish of a person who speaks these words! Therefore, in all the parishes and communities and with the help of the Archdiocesan offices of *Caritas* we are going to take up a collection of foods that can be preserved and we will send this and other useful things to the people of Nicaragua. I call upon the charity and the understanding love of all of you and invite you to help our brothers and sisters. See if there is an organization of *Caritas* in your community because they, as well as the pastors, have specific instructions to take up a collection that we will send by secure methods to the Church of Nicaragua.

Even though it is far away yet we cannot help but reflect on the tragedy in Hong Kong where 52,000 refugees from Vietnam are waiting for countries to open their arms so that they can find hope for their future lives. It is clear that El Salvador cannot accept these refugees at the present time but we can intervene so that other countries with better territorial resources might provide a home for these 52,000 refugees. This is an emergency since they cannot wait very long in Hong Kong.



## Events of the week

The wave of violence continues in our country: twenty-two teachers have been assassinated and two have disappeared: Juan José Herrera and Roberto Romero. Three teachers have been critically wounded and many have been threatened by the White Warriors Union. With profound emotion I remember a teacher speaking to her students: *I must say good bye to you because I have been threatened with death and I do not know if I will be able to return to give you classes.* Many schools in our country have been closed because of threats and fear.

In light of this reality I have prepared a message for the teachers that will be published on June 22<sup>nd</sup>, the Day of the Teacher. In this statement I develop three thoughts: a protest because of the repression that they are enduring, support for the authentic vocation of the teacher, and the presentation of a model for the life and work of teachers: the Divine Teacher. At this time, however, I want to speak in advance of the publication of this statement and present you with the central theme which is to support your vocation as teachers: *In these difficult situations for you I am very interested in supporting you so that you can carry out faithfully your vocation as teachers. Following the recommendations of the last national seminar on Educational Reform which viewed education as a process which provides the individual with a critical awareness and incorporates the individual into society as an agent of change in the construction of a more just society,* it was pointed out that this supposes that *we will form the people of El Salvador to be non-conformists, workers, realists, responsible and creative in developing the social and economic processes.*<sup>4</sup>

In this respect I also wish to defend the education given in our Catholic schools and which ill-intentioned people try to malign saying that in our schools the pupils are indoctrinated with Marxism. This is false. We only claim what I have just read; a training to be critical. It is no longer time to be a people that is passive and asleep and whom can be led anywhere. We want men and women in our schools who know how to criticize what is unjust and discern what is just, who don't follow just for the sake of following a tradition that has brought us to the situation we are now living.

There are more victims of violence: union leaders, members of the union UPT<sup>5</sup> and other organizations such as FECCAS, UTC, FAPU. The *campesinos* Manuel Barahona Chávez, Domingo Murcia, Rubén Quezada were arrested and then their bodies were found with bullet wounds. Three other bodies were unable to be identified in Tierra Blanca.

The White Warriors Union has made bloody threats against the poet, Rafael Góchez Sosa and Dr. Luis Alonso Posadas. Yesterday of one of the priests<sup>6</sup> received a similar threat as well as several Christians.

Regarding the abductions: we continue to be concerned about the fate of the two Englishmen and we ask that the families of Adolfo Antonio Rios<sup>7</sup>, Miguel Armando Miguel<sup>8</sup> and Carlos Rafael Nieto Alvarez<sup>9</sup> receive compensation.

So many people have been arrested and not brought before the courts despite the fact of having made recourse to the right of *habeas corpus* which is a constitutional right and which is now disregarded. I have a list of at least twelve persons who were arrested and are under these conditions. To mention their names supposes that the Church is defending them and so I mention their names to be the voice of those families who now experience so much anxiety:

Cruz Flores, Manuel Antonio Mejía, María Reina Mejía, Carlos Mejía, Blanca María Beltrán<sup>10</sup>, all peasants. Santana Antonio Rodríguez, Hermán Delgado, Mercedes Palacios, Pedro Juan Alvarado, José Mario Palacios, Cristóbal López, Benjamín Gavidia. Because of a lack of time I cannot give more details but these are cases of humble *campesinos* and workers, people who were leaving work or taking a walk or visiting a friend and never returned to their homes. Hopefully their disappearance is not permanent.

Thanks be to God that when a piece of the curtain is raised up and one is able to see the mystery of iniquity then perhaps one is able to have some hope, for example when the abuse of the police is discovered. During these days the true authors of a crime were discovered. At first it was thought to be a crime that was committed by the FPL and another band of this organization. The true intellectual author of this crime was an inspector of the National Police who has been a member of the security forces for eighteen years. The material authors were two ex-agents of the police who committed this crime and then received monetary compensation. The motive of this crime seems to have been jealousy and ambition. How many crimes are committed for unknown motives and then become part of this wave of terrorism!

We also have to mention the student strike that was carried out by the seventh year medical students and the demands made by the medical residents of the Instituto Social<sup>11</sup>, the dental students and medical students in other hospitals. Various organizations support their demands. The Church asks that we all be mindful of those who are infirm because we do not want them to suffer. We also ask that these conflicts be resolved in a rational way so that this does not lead to more violence

In summary I want to tell you that all of this is a symptom of a crisis and a symptom of the structural injustice in our country. Who does not see this? The situation cannot be resolved with repression or violence. It is necessary to enter more fully into all of this through dialogue, through a true dialogue and not a monologue that defends one way of thinking. We must enter into a dialogue that is willing to look for the truth and put aside those attitudes that would hinder this process. If we do not do this then we will not be able to discover the roots that have given rise to so many unpleasant things.

My sisters and brothers, I want to tell you that I also run this risk, the risk of becoming insensitive, insensitive to the many, many things that occur. As we say: *to listen as one listens to rain*. Remember that each death is a tragedy that involves so many lives. Let us experience each death as the loss of a human life, an abuse of the dignity and rights of the human person. Let us not become insensitive! Let us always have and ask for this sensitivity so that we do not sin with our silence or become complicit with the situation in which we live. Those who can speak out, let them speak out! Those who can make claims as professionals, let them make these claims!

For this reason I believe that it is urgent to call out to those persons responsible for leading our country or those who exercise leadership in the different social classes: it is urgent that we return to a state of constitutionality. If we simply have recourse to that which is legal during a State of Siege then there are many occasions for abuses to go unpunished but if we keep in mind that behind the law of the State of Siege there is a constitution and the democratic organization of the state, then we must allow this democratic process to function and allow the law of our constitution to enlighten our path. I believe that those who are the guardians of this constitution because of their oath of office are more obliged to give good

example with regard to respecting the laws which all of us must obey. We must unmask the abuses of authority and submit to justice every act that touches on the law and know how to punish those who are culpable.

My sisters and brothers, I hope that one day all of this darkness will be revealed in the light of day and that so many disappearances, so many assassinations, so many unidentified corpses and so many abductions that nothing is known about will be revealed in the light. Perhaps we will be astonished when we come to know the authors of these actions. Now is the time to respect the laws of our country once again.

Finally I want to extend my prayers of comfort and consolation to those families who have been bereft by so much criminal activity.

### **The Eucharist, inspiration strength for our eschatological hope**

The third and last point of this homily. What does it mean? On several occasions I have explained the meaning of the word *eschatology*: that which is final, that which is beyond history, definitive, the goal toward which all women and men, all of history and all people travel.

At the conclusion of today's gospel, after Jesus instituted the Eucharist, he bids farewell to his disciples and tells them: *I shall not drink again the fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it anew in the Kingdom of God* (22). The Eucharist makes us look back to Calvary twenty centuries ago and beyond that to Moses and the old covenant, an incomparable horizon of history. But it also looks ahead to the future, to the eternal, eschatological, and definitive horizon that presents itself as a demanding ideal to all political systems, to all social struggles, to all those concerned for the earth. The Church does not ignore the earth, but in the Eucharist she says to all who work on earth: *look beyond!* Each time the Victim is lifted up at Mass, Christ's call is heard: *Until we drink it anew in my Father's kingdom*. And the people reply: *Come, Lord Jesus!* There is a hope. They are a people that march to encounter the Lord. Death is not the end. Death is the opening of eternity's portal.

That is why I say: all the blood, all the dead, all the mysteries of iniquity and sin, all the tortures, all those dungeons of our security forces where unfortunately many persons slowly die --- all of this does not mean that they are lost forever. There is an eschatological horizon that illuminates all this darkness and that enables truth and justice and victory to sing. This eschatological horizon will be the definitive triumph of all those who struggle for justice and love.

The Eucharist nourishes all of the just claims of the earth because it provides a true horizon. When individuals or groups want to work only for the earth and have no horizon of eternity and do not care about religious horizons, they are not true liberators. You cannot trust them. Today they struggle for power, and once in power, tomorrow they will be the worst repressors if they have no horizon that goes beyond history to sanction the good and the bad that we do on earth. That way there can be no true justice or effective work on behalf of the just demands of people.

Let us give thanks to God that on this feast of Corpus Christi that is framed with so much tragedy, there is also much encouragement because of the power of the just demands of people and the political power of the people. Jesus is not a foreigner to any of this. Jesus is

tortured. Jesus is unjustly tried. Jesus, an innocent victim, dies as a criminal. Jesus, the great liberator, is giving meaning to so much death, to so many corpses, to so much bloodshed. Without a doubt Jesus sanctifies all these realities with the perspective of eternal life and hope: *take and eat, this is my Body, this is the Blood of the eternal covenant.*(23) So be it.

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<sup>1</sup> Discourse of John Paul II in Cracow to representatives of the mass media (10 June 1979), *Osservatore Romano*, 24 June 1979.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Mensaje al pueblo de Nicaragua* of the Bishops' Conference of Nicaragua (2 June 1979), *Orientación*, 17 June 1979.

<sup>4</sup> Message of Mons Romero, archbishop of San Salvador, to teachers (22 June 1979), *Orientación*, 24 June 1979.

<sup>5</sup> Unión de Pobladores de Tugurios (UPT).

<sup>6</sup> On 16 June 1979 the UGB threatened Fr Rafael Palacios with death.

<sup>7</sup> A farmer of Santa Ana kidnapped on 11 June 1979 and freed the following day. See *La Prensa Gráfica*, 12 & 13 June 1979.

<sup>8</sup> Industrialist of San Salvador kidnapped on 29 May 1979. The ERP claimed responsibility in a press statement on 14 June 1979. See *La Crónica del Pueblo*, 14 June 1979.

<sup>9</sup> Coffee grower of Santa Ana kidnapped by the ERP on 14 June 1979. See *La Crónica del Pueblo*, 15 June 1979.

<sup>10</sup> Blanca Elia Beltrán, See *Orientación*, 24 June 1979.

<sup>11</sup> Instituto Salvadoreño del Seguro Social (ISS).

*Marginal References* (1) Mk 14,22.24; (2) Mk 14,22.24; (3) Mk 14,22; (4) Mk 14,24; (5) Ex 24,3; (6) Ex 24,4; (7) Ex 24,5-6; (8) Ex 24,7; (9) Ex 24,8; (10) Ex 24,5; (11) Heb 9,11-12; (12) Jn 1,29; (13) Heb 9,14; (14) Heb 9,12; (15) Mk 14,24; (16) Heb 9,15; (17) Lk 22,19; (18) LG 9; (19) Ex 34,29; (20) Jn 18,37; (21) PP 31; (22) Mk 14,25; (23) Mk 14,22.24.