

CHRIST, TRUE KING-SHEPHERD OF ALL

Sixteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time
July 22, 1979

Jeremiah 23:1-6

Ephesians 2:13-18

Mark 6:30-34

My dear sisters and brothers.

I believe that I interpret the feelings of all of you this morning as we greet our sister Republic of Nicaragua¹. We greet them with an expression of fraternal prayer and solidarity because today, more than ever, they need our spiritual support. Our joy at this time of their liberation also causes us to be concerned that this dawn of freedom will not be frustrated but rather that the Lord, who has been so good, will continue to be the inspiration of the people of Nicaragua. They need this inspiration and also need to remember the price of this liberation. More than twenty-five thousand people have died, a very costly price. Consequently, the gift that God is offering the people of Nicaragua at this moment should not be squandered.

I believe that Nicaragua presents the best background for our meditation on Christ, King and Shepherd and for our meditation on the realities that are presented to us in the gospel. Even though the civil war has ended, the consequences of this war are profound and great. It can be said of this beloved people what Jesus proclaims to us today as he stands in the midst of his people: *His heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd* (1). This same figure can be transferred to our own situation because our people experience the same reality. We are a flock that looks for an identity, a solution to our problems and today we find in the gospel message the answer of God that fills us with hope. God desires that Nicaragua and our nation and all the nations of the world, in the midst of problems and in critical times --- God wants people to look to the Good Shepherd, to the Shepherd-King promised in the prophesy of the first reading and realized in the gospel which was proclaimed today.

We connect our thoughts this morning with the ideas expressed in last Sunday's homily and the Sunday before last. Look at how our Sunday reflection is making Christians more aware of the central person whom we follow and love! Let us always be mindful of this central person in whom we, as Christians and as citizens, have placed all our hope and faith and who is the surety of our salvation. It is the Son of God who became man: Jesus Christ, who in different ways is the center of our soul and prayer. Hopefully today, as in past Sundays, we will see him as the prophet, the great prophet who brings God's revelation to us. We can also say that this mission of communicating the message has also been entrusted to his people, not only the hierarchy, the bishops and priests, but to all those who have been baptized and want to fulfill their mission. We can say that you are a prophetic people, participants in the great prophetic mission of Jesus Christ, the great prophet. Today the person of Christ is presented to us as King-Shepherd. He is the King and Shepherd of all the people of the world, of all history. He is the key to the solution of history and the critical situation of people. Only people who look toward him will find a solution. If we turn our back on Christ then we will continue to live in the absurdity of a scattered flock.

But not only Christ --- for what is wonderful here is that Jesus desired to identify himself with baptized people of every era to accomplish his royal mission, his mission as king. We, hierarchy and people, are called to proclaim the eternal, sole, universal kingship of Christ. We are called to bring all people, all families into submission to this royal King. This is not some despotic regime but a regime of love. It is the goal of our freedom for Saint Paul has said: *to be free in the love of Jesus Christ* (2).

I entitle this homily: Christ, the true King-Shepherd of all people. I will develop the following points: First, the poverty of people who are governed badly; Second, good and bad shepherds of the people; Third, Christ, King-Shepherd.

The poverty of people who are governed badly

Today's readings invite us to see the poverty, the calamity and the misery of people when they have evil rulers and evil pastors. I want to remind you that the prophet Jeremiah, in the first reading, is addressing government officials and the king of Judah. God called the poor prophet Jeremiah --- perhaps the prophet with the most sensitive heart and who by temperament wanted to avoid conflict --- to be a prophet of conflict. Jeremiah was young and filled with hope as King Josiah began a project of national restoration, a religious renewal based on the word of God. Everything was going well but Josiah was killed on the battlefield of Megiddo. There began a period of incompetent kings who sought alliances and undertook very mistaken actions.

The prophet Jeremiah had to proclaim some very unpleasant things. He had to announce the deportation of people when no one thought that the people could suffer a humiliation so great as that of being held captive and sent into exile. For this reason Jeremiah was not well received and it would have been easier to flatter and tell the government officials: *Everything is well! Stay on course!* But the prophet, in the name of God, had to say: *All is not well! You are mistaken!* and also had to denounce the sins of his time. The prophet saw how his own country was falling further and further into an abyss. He describes, with words that could only have been commanded by God, the situation of the governing officials of Israel: *Woe to the shepherds who mislead and scatter the flock of my pasture* (3)

We find in today's prophesy a synthesis of the calamities of people who are governed badly: they are dispersed. The authorities that ought to be a moral power that unites people, because of their errors, have now become a power that disperses people, creating a flock without a shepherd. (4)

Jeremiah condemns the sin of driving away the flock.(5) The government officials, instead of attracting the sheep into one sheepfold, drive them out, repress them, scatter them and do not care for them.

The prophet also denounces fear and dread.(6) The flock is frightened, a people living in terror, a people intimidated. Yesterday I lived this reality in the towns of Chalatenango. What fear is experienced in the people! Men do not go to their houses but live and sleep in the mountains. Truly a dispersed and fearful flock!

The prophet then says that the sheep are lost.(7) The shepherds seem to no longer hear the echo of those who have disappeared. The sheep that should have been cared for in one sheepfold with the kindness of the shepherd are persecuted, despised, and now living on the margins.

The picture that the gospel paints for us concerning the times of Jesus seems to leap off the pages. Jesus is looking for a few moments of rest but the people need him and go seeking him. There is a multitude, a multitude that is described in the gospel with incredible words: *When he disembarked and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd* (8). There was no hurry or tiredness because the sheep needed him. This is what it means to be a Good Shepherd. Jesus discovers that the people have lost their unity and vision and looked for political solutions in simply earthly solutions. They had forgotten about God and there was no one who guided their search. He began to teach them that salvation only comes from God, from God who loves us, from God who does not abandon us but who loves us and does not scatter. Such is the teaching of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

In the second reading, in Saint Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he presents us with a division among the Jews. Because they had the privilege of receiving the promise and revelation they had become a proud and selfish people. They had built a wall in the Temple so that the Gentiles could not enter. The Gentiles were the other part of humanity that the Jews considered dogs, enemies --- people who were hated. This was the situation: there was no peace and no unity. This is the people that Saint Paul describes today: *alienated from the community of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, without hope and without God in the world* (9). How sad! Without hope and without God in the world! There is nothing more horrible than a people who can not see the person of God, who lack God's guidance. It is for this reason that I am filled with hope when I see our Church incarnated in the world. I am filled with hope even though the Church is criticized. My dear sisters and brothers who fill the Cathedral and chapels and other places where you have come together this morning to join in our Sunday reflection, let us now reflect on our people.

Events of the week

Applying this background I would like us to focus on the example that Nicaragua gives us today. This situation cost the lives of twenty-five thousand people. People were not listened to and in order to be heard it was necessary to come to this bloodbath. Look at what it means to make an absolute of power! Look at what it means to make an idol of power! A tyrant who believes he is indispensable and is not concerned about killing all the people. The experience of Nicaragua makes us realize that power cannot be maintained by repression or the corruption of its functions. The time will come when people become tired of being exploited and oppressed. This is a magnificent lesson for those who believe in this power that cannot be maintained.

This is something that we should be mindful of. You saw the article that was written by the Ambassador of the United States. *It would be a mistake, an absolutely unpardonable mistake, to close our eyes to the dramatic lesson of the tragic events in our neighboring country.*² A sense of prudence should make us reflect.

There is also a lesson for our Church. In the conflict with Nicaragua not only the Archbishop, but the whole Episcopal Conference was united and together they denounced the injustices and supported and enlightened the people. Without identifying themselves with the Sandinistas, the Church played a very important role because they remained close to and faithful to the people. It is for this reason that now the Sandinistas trust the Church and do not view the Church as an ally of Somoza or an ally of the revolutionary forces but rather they consider the Church as a mother who knew how to understand. Now at this time of reconstruction they rely on the Church for Christian enlightenment.

Another reflection on this matter. It is sad to think that the great joy and enthusiasm and hope that has been awakened in the people of El Salvador, this excitement over the liberation of our sister country, Nicaragua, is not shared by our government or the dominant classes. But there is a great joy and satisfaction in the Church because we have expressed our solidarity with the Church of Nicaragua and so now we feel united to their joy and in prayer and in light of the gospel we share their responsibility.

We were filled with hope, like people who breathe fresh air, when the ideals of the new Junta were published³. Among other things they stated:

The necessary legislation will be enacted in order to organize a regime of effective democracy, a regime of justice and social progress.

We guarantee that the judiciary will have exclusive jurisdiction and will function with the necessary independence of criteria of its members, thus enabling the re-establishment of the correct application of justice and guaranteeing the full exercise of the rights of citizens.

We are profoundly satisfied with the guarantees that are offered to the enforcement of human rights legislation, focusing on those realities that caused Nicaragua to suffer as a result of being a people who were governed badly. For example, they speak about freedom of information and the communication of opinions:

All the laws will be repealed that repress the free communication and free thought and all the laws that repress freedom of information.

Freedom to worship: *the complete exercise of freedom to worship will be guaranteed.*

Unions and citizen organization: *Legislation will be enacted and actions adopted that guarantee and promote the free organization of unions and all citizens in the cities and in the rural areas.* Blessed be God that in Central America there is at least one place where the right of women and men to organize themselves is respected and is respected even for the humblest *campesino*.*

Speaking more about the fulfillment of human rights: *All repressive laws will be repealed especially those that are contrary to the dignity and integrity of the human person: assassination, disappearance, torture, illegal arrests and illegal searches of homes*... All repressive institutions will be abolished such as the Office of National Security and the Military Intelligence Service which have been responsible for the political repression of the people and their organizations.* Let us translate this reality to certain organizations that we are all aware of.

Regarding the vices of the dictatorship: *We will eliminate the corruption that has characterized this dictatorship: fraudulent appropriation of goods, contraband, illicit exemptions and dispensations from the payment of taxes, fraudulent bids, deceitful advantages in real estate, misuse of state funds, etc... With regard to the application of justice: Military personnel and civilians who committed crimes against the people will be brought before the courts of justice.**

When speaking about the new army in Nicaragua it is stated: *Corrupt military officials and those guilty of crimes against the people will have no place in the new national army*...*

We could continue to cite many other passages of this document but I am filled with joy when I read the following: *We will undertake a policy of repatriation of the people of Nicaragua who are*

living abroad with the purpose of enabling them to share their knowledge and experience with the country and actively participate in the task of reconstruction and development.

Hopefully, my sisters and brothers, that here among us it will not be necessary to have recourse to a bloodbath because all of these things that are stated above are not favors that are being given to people but are rights that belong to the human person. There is still time to recover these rights through reasonable means and this is always possible if the government will become what the Bible tells us today: an understanding shepherd of the people.

I also want to greet the Nicaraguan sisters and brothers who are living in our midst. Naturally I distinguish two types of refugees in our country: those who are happy at this time of the dawning of freedom among the people and so I exhort you to return to your country so that you can build a more just and human nation, a place where you can make more present the Kingdom of God among us. There is another group of people who have fled because their leader has been overthrown. El Salvador offers you hospitality but I also warn you that as we welcome you we ask you not to become collaborators in perfecting and increasing the repression among our people.* We hope that you will feel at home with us and help us to change the situation of injustice and abuse and disorder into a new world that we want to be inspired by our Shepherd and King, Jesus Christ.

We want to inform you that Caritas is fulfilling the Church's mission as they continue to assist the Church in Nicaragua. We are sending them many things that have been collected: 80 sacks of corn, 38 sacks of beans, 12 sacks of sugar, 32 sacks of rice and money which we will give more detailed information about later. Our hands remain open and we will collect whatever you wish to donate to the people of Nicaragua. I exhort everyone to be hospitable for as long as our sister Republic needs our assistance.

There we can see a reflection of our own situation. Indeed, we can use the words of the gospel to describe our own reality: *a dispersed flock seeking unity and a way out of this dead end street.*

The threats continue. The center of the Salvadorian Council for Youth was threatened and we express our solidarity to them as they call for a cessation of these threats against agencies that are doing good for our people.⁴ There is a long list of schools, orphanages, and counseling centers in our country, state and Church organizations involved in caring for our children that are doing much good. Hopefully the threats against these institutions and works will not continue because they need the support of our people and not threats.

The teachers who have suffered so many humiliations during the past month have entered a new phase in their strike. They have drawn up a list of demands⁵. Our radio station, YSAX, has made a very pointed commentary on all of this⁶. Before abusing the strike, it would be good to have recourse to dialogue which has great importance in our country. ANDES ought to do everything possible to enter into dialogue. We believe that a strike or the programmed work stoppage that is scheduled for this week will make dialogue even more difficult rather than facilitate it. It would be better for ANDES to seek alliances with different educational institutions, especially the Federation of Catholic School whom I know are willing to support putting pressure on the government in support of your just demands. ANDES has to learn how to create alliances among those who work in the educational field and not be so arrogant as to believe that they are the only ones concerned about the nation's educational system. Other educational forces were able to achieve substantial gains during the last Congress on Educational Reform. Would it not be possible for these other forces, distinct from ANDES but in solidarity with ANDES, to struggle together to find reasonable means for dialogue?

I want to say the same concerning other labor conflicts that seem to be on-going. I was happy to read the news in *El Mundo* that five labor conflicts have been resolved by the Ministry of Work --- this is their work. The newspapers also reported that there are still 253 conflicts which require a review or change of the collective bargaining contract and finally the signatures of the parties involved to show their agreement. We are told that the whole Department of Work is attending to these matters⁷. I want to tell our beloved workers, those to whom the Church has always expressed her solidarity: know how to distinguish the problem that is occurring in your factory from other expressions of solidarity that are also valid but that many times can be beyond the ability of labor-management to resolve. Be very careful about the political dimension of a strike especially when they go beyond labor limits. These words are meant to help you and to guide your actions reasonably and not according to some whim or who has more influence.

This dispersed people continues to lament the multiple arbitrary arrests many of which have the prospect of becoming people who have disappeared.

María Josefina García and Francisco Martínez Canizález in the village of Las Ventanas in El Paisnal; María Josefina's body was found after she was assassinated.

Luis Abel Corbera Romero and Antonio Corbera Romero, brothers and their whereabouts is unknown. Their father, Esteban and a little girl, Marcela, four years old, were beaten but not arrested.

Miguel Angel Terezón Ramos, a student, was arrested when he entered his printing office, Offset Atlántida. On behalf of his (Miguel Angel's) cause FAPU has occupied the church El Calvario demanding his freedom and his family asks that the equipment in his printing office also be respected.

Salvador Flores Benítez disappeared twenty-three days ago.

David Eleoneo Ponce was arrested in the park of Pasaquina and his parents have sent me an anxious cry for help. Concerned and worried they say: *On behalf of our son we direct our words to you so that you might make public the plea for freedom for our son. We want him to be handed over to us alive and, God willing, they have not killed him as they have done to so many others who have been arrested in our country.* I have witnessed the affliction of this mother. Like every other mother here, you can understand how she has looked for him in different centers of the Security Forces and still knows nothing about his whereabouts.

I know that the White Warriors Union has threatened Dr. Rogelio Monterrosa Sicilia, a lawyer in Santiago de María, with death. We pray to God that these threats go no further and that they hear the voice of their conscience that clearly proclaims the fifth commandment: *You shall not kill.*

I want to echo the voice of the inhabitants of a part of Colonia 10 de Septiembre who have been threatened with dislocation because of modern constructions. It would be good to be mindful of these poor people and while the progress of the country is desirable this should not be carried out by unjust and abusive means, especially against the poor.

I want to refer to the fire in *La Crónica del Pueblo*. When we left the Cathedral last Sunday, someone left a donation of 5.00 colones with the following words: *During these tragic hours let us lend a hand to the prestigious publisher so that such a courageous newspaper might once again begin to function. We would do the same for the Archdiocese's means of communication because*

*they are on the side of the poor who suffer.** I know that our call has been echoed and I simply want to reinforce it by citing some wonderful gestures that I have seen: the reporters who work for this newspaper spontaneously offered to go and fix up the disorder caused by the fire, other workers are asking for contributions to help in the restoration. I have spoken with the Director of the newspaper, Dr. González, and he is grateful for these gestures. I hope that with your good will you can assist him. He wants to begin by cleaning up the place where his newspaper is located. With the first help that has arrived he has opened an account in Banco Cuscatlán where those who want to help can send their contributions. The account number is 05771.

We greet with joy the appearance of another publishing effort from the Independent Newspaper Agency, the API. The thirteenth edition of the newspaper has been printed and there is hope for freedom of expression. We greet the people who work there and support this effort that we hope will always be maintained as a voice of the truth.

Good and bad shepherds of the people

All of this leads us to the belief that the civil and religious leaders have a powerful influence over people. In this light you will be able to understand what I will say in the second point of my homily, namely that Christ is the true Shepherd of all people. What is highlighted in today's readings is the fact that the King-Shepherd needs the collaboration of the people. In this way Christians and non-Christians are thus able to participate in his reign and able to place morality and the law of God under his rule. The civil and religious leaders of the people, however, also have a responsibility. This morning the prophet Jeremiah focuses on the responsibility of civil and religious leaders. He says: *Woe to the shepherds who do not care for their flock* (11). Here Jeremiah is speaking about both the religious and civil leaders and so we, who share in this tremendous responsibility, have to analyze the characteristics of good and bad shepherds.

Jeremiah reprimands the false pastors: *You have scattered my sheep and driven them away. You have not cared for them, but I will take care to punish your evil deeds* (12). When reflecting on the goodness and the evil of leaders we must realize that there is a God who moves a good leader to govern well and inspires the good actions of those who collaborate with them. God is also just and will hold people responsible for the evil actions that they did in this sublime role of leadership.

The people that Jesus encountered appeared to be a multitude without authority, a multitude without a shepherd (13) and he will hold the shepherds responsible for their actions. *I will take care of you for your misdeeds* (14). How terrible to fall into the hands of God when one has worshiped power as a god! How terrible to be held accountable by One who possesses all power.

The first reading also tells us that God takes care of the people and this should fill us with great comfort: *I myself will gather the remnant of my flock from all the lands to which I have driven them and bring them back to their meadow; there they shall increase and multiply. I will appoint shepherds for them who will shepherd them so that they need no longer fear and tremble; and none shall be missing* (15). How beautiful! Everything is not lost and better days will come. The Lord will raise up the people and give better leadership to our people so that they are not a flock without a shepherd but rather led by true love.

At this time I want to go back to the documents of the Vatican Council where we find the following words that explain the origins of political communities and how nations come into existence: *Men, families and the various groups which make up the civil community are aware that they cannot achieve a truly human life by their own unaided efforts. They see the need for a wider community, within which each one makes his specific contribution every day toward an ever*

broader realization of the common good. For this purpose they set up a political community according to various forms. The political community exists, consequently, for the sake of the common good, in which it finds its full justification and significance, and the source of its inherent legitimacy. Indeed, the common good embraces the sum of those conditions of the social life whereby men, families and associations more adequately and readily may attain their own perfection (16). The political community comes into existence in order to search for the common good. It is this principle that justifies the political community and gives it meaning and from which it derives its primary and proper legitimacy ... the common good... There are many different people in the political community and, rightfully so, they will be inclined toward different solutions. Therefore in order that the political community might not disappear because of this plurality of vision, it becomes indispensable that some authority should direct the action of all people toward the common good and do this not in some mechanical or despotic way but working primarily as a moral force that is grounded in freedom and a sense of responsibility to each individual. It is evident that the political community and public authority is based on human nature but at the same time it is part of the order that is foreseen by God even when the determination of the political regime and the selection of rulers is left to the free determination of the citizens. It follows then that the exercise of political authority in the community, as well as in its representative institutions, ought to be exercised within the limits of moral order in order to achieve the common good ... all of this according to the established legitimate juridical order or according to the order that will be established. This then, is when citizens are obliged in conscience to obey. From all of this we can see the responsibility and the dignity and the importance of civil leaders. But when public authority exceeds its competency and oppresses its citizens, these people should not shun the objective demands of the common good. Therefore it is licit for them to defend their rights and the rights of their fellow citizens from abuse of such authority, always mindful of the limits of natural law and the gospel.

Excuse me for the following words, but these words are often spoken to us and not fully understood: *all power comes from God.*(17) It is true that no one is able to govern unless God gives them this power. When Pilate bragged about his power over life and death, Jesus told him: *you would have no power over me if it had not been given to you from above* (18). In other words, a civil leader is a representative of the Shepherd-King as long as he interprets the thought and the love of God through the enactment of just laws. When someone makes power an absolute and an idol and turns against God's laws, against human rights, then we cannot say that such authority comes from God. It is not lawfully directed as God wills and therefore the people must obey up to a certain point out of love for the objective common good, which is the nation's reason for being, but they still retain the right to seek justice. The example is very clear and hopefully we will return to the source of all authority who is the Lord.

The gesture in today's gospel seems to me to be an indispensable part of our reflection because Jesus tells his apostles, those who were chosen as shepherds to represent the Divine Pastor to humanity: *Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while* (19). This rest that Jesus speaks about has a profound meaning of prayer. Prayer, drawing near to God, reflecting on the exercise of authority in light of God --- this is the duty of those who lead in the civil arena as well as the ecclesiastical arena. If religious or civil leaders separate themselves from God, then their power is not united with the power of God and instead of being a uniting power, as the Council has told us, their power becomes one of scattering. Instead of doing good they do evil.

Therefore it is necessary here to call upon all the People of God who because of their Baptism participate in this prerogative of Christ, the King, to recreate the structures of the earth and the consciences of all people, to recreate all that is in the world and in society and to orient them in

such a way that they are placed under God's rule. The same must be done with the political order so that it does not turn aside from its true objective but rather becomes oriented toward God. This is the great role of Christians: to attend to Christ who calls us to frequent reflection so that we might see how we are living out our responsibility and life, so that we might make our life a commitment that is truly collaborating with the Kingdom of God in the world and not the opposite, separating ourselves from the reign of Christ and submitting ourselves to the king of sin, the idol of money, the idol of abuse. We must remember that we will be held accountable by the true God concerning the ways we have participated in his divine power. God will rejoice and be satisfied that there were children who united themselves intimately with him, children who governed and were concerned that creation should be oriented toward him.

Christ, king and shepherd

The first reading offers us a blessed promise of God that a just king will arise: *Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up a righteous shoot of David; as king he shall reign and govern wisely, he shall do what is just and right in the land. In his days Judah shall be saved, Israel shall dwell in security. This is the name they give him: "The Lord our justice"* (20).

The second reading presents Christ as the King-Shepherd who unites two people who are divided: *The wall in the Temple that signified the separation of Jews from Gentiles was broken down through his death on the cross. Thus all hatred was nailed to the cross and all divisions were overcome. Christ is our peace. Let us remember the beautiful phrase of today's reading: Christ is our peace. He reconciled us with God and through the cross put that enmity to death. He came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near, for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father* (21).

This is the function of the people of God. I have always asked that we distinguish between the People of God and people in general. When I proclaim all these promises of God, when I proclaim the richness of participating in Christ, the prophet, priest and king, I am directing my words to you, the community of baptized persons, Christians, because with this name that we received at the time of our Baptism we are called to be responsible for the world that we must save. As a People of God and as a prophetic people who participate in the royalty of the King-Shepherd, each one of us who has been baptized has to reflect on our activity so that we do not act in contradiction to the Kingdom of God or his laws but rather examine ourselves so that we remain faithful collaborators and reflections of the Kingdom of God on earth.

Life of the Church

I repeat, Christ now has representatives here in the world: we, the Church, the community, are his representatives. Therefore as we focus on the past week, I also focus on the events that occur within the Church community. This ought to be the primary task of the priest, religious women, faithful and all pastoral agents. We are not meddling in politics but enlightening the political situation with the light of the gospel. Our primary task is to light the lamp of the gospel in our communities.

Therefore I am glad to be able to refer to the magisterium of the Pope because he has enlightened the world with the words that he spoke to the ministers of agriculture and experts in food. More than one hundred fifty nations had gathered together to help the poor *campesinos* and the Pope said: *Help them through a redistribution of income.* The Pope also said that they should have a voice in political decisions⁸. These are wonderful words and I refer to these words so that

you can see how the Pope, while he advises priests to exercise their priestly functions, also reminds them of this other dimension. There are no paid campaigns of slander against this other dimension of the Pope's message.* It would be wonderful if the same interests that are behind these paid campaigns of slander⁹ that speak about priests being partial in their ministry, would also pay to publish the discourses of the Pope in Oaxaca, Monterrey and Santo Domingo and would publish his encyclical where he cries out against all the abuses that the Church, and as such, the priests, must also denounce.*

This week our Archdiocesan community sends a fraternal greeting to the Diocese of Santiago de María on the occasion of their patronal feast, Saint James, the apostle (July 25th) and Saint Ann (July 26th).

I have already spoken about the celebration of Our Lady of Mount Carmel but I want to emphasize two great resources for our ministry. First, the presence of Mary in our people is a great blessing of God. A people so devoted to Mary! Second, is the treasure of our popular devotion. My sisters and brothers, let us not lose the inheritance of our parents and grandparents. Even though this might seem a little ridiculous and imperfect but nevertheless it is the devotion of our people. By cultivating this devotion we are able to find the religion that God desires for this present situation.

Yesterday I was in San Miguel de Mercedes fulfilling my duty to encourage the Christian communities that are being established there. The military barriers at the entrance to the village prevented many people from coming and others were turned away. I had to get out of my car and then it was searched. Even the bishop is suspect! They told me later that this was done for my own safety. If this were for my own safety why were they doubtful about my objective? I told them: *Why not allow these people who have been detained here to enter with me. I will walk with them.* These were women and they were not allowed to enter. Later I had the opportunity to look for them in San Antonio Los Ranchos where they were waiting for me because they were very desirous to speak with their pastor. I believe that the barriers that were set up in San Miguel de Mercedes and those that were placed in front of the Cathedral during our prayer vigil are an attempt to disturb the freedom of our Church. I respectfully ask that these gestures not be repeated because they are offensive to our Church, even though they are used as a pretext for the safety of the bishop. I want to repeat what I have said before: *The Shepherd does not want this security as long as the same security is not given to the flock.**

Our travels yesterday ended in the wonderful village of La Aldeíta and there the community of priests, women religious and seminarians were participating in a family celebration. I was able to greet a new deacon, Jaime Paredes, who is lending us his services. Again I congratulate him and we hope that he will incorporate himself into this exemplary community and that soon we will have the honor of ordaining him a priest.

I have already mentioned the prayer vigil in the Cathedral and so leaving aside for the moment the unpleasant military vigilance, I want to congratulate the Vicariates that promoted this long prayer vigil of forty hours. Many communities of priests participated and men and women came from all parts of the country. I had the opportunity to greet another priest who is also lending us his services, Father Luis. I want to welcome him and wish him success in his ministry in the rural area of our diocese which is in much need of his Eucharistic collaboration.

A document was published in *Orientación* in which the priests affirmed their intention to realize their priestly vocation¹⁰. In light of their reflection, occasioned by the death of an assassinated

priest in the fulfillment of his duties, the priests want to revitalize our lives and our parish organizations with prayer, gatherings, study, and the establishment of the foundations for the kingdom of God.

In our next edition of *Orientación* we will publish the statement of the Sisters who expressed their solidarity with the priests¹.

We also want to greet and congratulate the new governing body of the Federation of Catholic High Schools and Elementary Schools.

I want to denounce once again the fact that our brother, Father Astor Ruiz, who was returning from Colombia, where he and other priests and Sisters participated in a study of the document of Puebla, was not allowed to enter the country and he was deported to Guatemala. The same occurred yesterday to another priest who has worked for many years among us, Father Juan Deplank. He arrived at the airport and was deported to Guatemala. There is no freedom for our priests to fulfill their mission which at times requires them to cross our borders.

In a special way I want to unite myself to the pain of the family of Doña Abigail de Giraldo who died yesterday in San Miguel.

As we review our history as a Church community and as a nation (the Church is part of this nation) and as we look at the mutual interests of the Church and the nation, we should not see ourselves as two antagonistic entities but rather as complimentary. We should both find our inspiration in the only King and Shepherd: Christ. People can only be a people when they are treated with dignity and their rights are respected, when their government officials and all people and the lively forces of the nation look heavenward and await the One who is our king, our justice and our peace: Christ, the Lord. My beloved sisters and brothers, there is no other solution. To build a nation, a future, a better world and ignore the presence of God, is like building a house on sand. (22) The winds and the violence will destroy everything. Only those who build on the rock of faith, on the inspiration of the King that God has put in place to govern woman and men in their vocation on earth, as well as their vocation in heaven --- only in this way can government officials, bishops, parents, collaborators, and pastoral ministers work together for the nation and the Church. Only with the inspiration of Christ, who had compassion on the multitude and with our own collaboration, can we find the divine resources and people better than ourselves to help govern the people.

The Lord wants this reflection to lead us to take our place in society. There each one, living out their vocation and looking toward the Lord for inspiration, will be able to give life its true meaning and each person will build the nation and build the Church. So be it!*

¹ On 19 July 1979 Anastasio Somoza was overthrown and the Frente Sandinista para la Liberación Nacional (FSLN) came to power.

² *El Diario de Hoy*, 18 July 1979.

³ Programa de la Junta de Gobierno de Reconstrucción Nacional de Nicaragua, *ECA 371* (1979), pp. 835-842. The following passages in italics are quotations from this document.

⁴ See Comunicado urgente del Consejo Salvadoreño de Menores al pueblo en general (14 July 1979), *La Prensa Gráfica*, 17 July, 1979.

⁵ See *El Diario de Hoy*, 13 July 1979.

⁶ The commentaries of YSAX for 1979 have been published in *El Salvador: entre el terror y la esperanza*, UCA Editores, San Salvador, 1982. See p. 345.

⁷ See *El Mundo*, 17 July 1979.

⁸ See Discourse of John Paul II to the participants in the World Congress for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (14 July 1979), *Osservatore Romano*, 29 July 1979.

⁹ Reference to a paid advertisement, unsigned by any person or group, which quotes and selects the following words from the message of John Paul II in the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe on 27 January 1979: “You are priests and religious; you are not social directors, political leaders or functionaries with temporal authority”. See *Diario de Hoy*, 20 July 1979.

¹⁰ See La opción preferencial por los pobres de la arquidiócesis, *Orientación*, 29 July 1979.

¹¹ See Comunicado de solidaridad de las religiosas que trabajamos en pastoral con los sacerdotes de la arquidiócesis, *Orientación*, 5 August 1979.

Marginal References (1) Mk 6,34; (2) Gal 5,1; (3) Jr 23,1; (4) Jr 23,2; (5) Jr 23,2; (6) Jr 23,4b; (7) Jr 23,4c; (8) Mk 6,34; (9) Ep 2,12; (10) Ex 20,13; (11) Jr 23,1; (12) Jr 23,1-2; (13) Mk 6,34; (14) Jr 23,2; (15) Jr 23,3-4; (16) GS 74; (17) Rm 13,1; (18) Jn 19,11; (19) Mk 6,31; (20) Jr 23,5-6; (21) Ep 2,14.16-18; (22) Mt 7,24-27.