

THE DIVINE SAVIOUR SOLVES OUR PROBLEMS

Seventeenth Sunday of Ordinary Time
July 29, 1979

2 King 4:42-44
Ephesians 4:1-6
John 6:1-15

My dear sisters and brothers

The Liturgical Year offers us an incomparable framework in order to prepare for the feast of our heavenly patron, the Divine Savior of the World. The readings from the gospel of Saint Mark, the gospel that we have been reflecting on this year, gives way to the gospel of Saint John, more specifically, the sixth chapter of Saint John which we will reflect on during the next four weeks. You can read this chapter in your homes and experience the fruits of this reflection. Here we are dealing with a Eucharistic discourse that took place in Capernaum where the divine Savior is presented as the light for our problems, as the effective solution for all the problems of history and therefore, the solution of all of our country's problems. We will reflect on this gospel during the two Sundays before our patronal feast and for two Sundays after that celebration. Thus our celebration of the Divine Savior is framed by the gospel of Saint John and so our Church continues with great enthusiasm to prepare for this celebration of the feast of her divine spouse: Christ.

The gospel of Saint John has very original characteristics that are a true gift from God that we are able to place in the hands of people during these Sundays. The gospel is very ecclesiological. It can be said that the whole gospel of Saint John is a treatise on ecclesiology, that is, a treatise on the Church. Saint John presents the Church as a prolongation of the personality of Christ but does this in such a way that the gospel cannot be understood if it is seen as a biography of Christ. This gospel can only be understood by looking at it from the perspective of the community, of any Christian community. Therefore, our Archdiocese with all its parish communities and ecclesial base communities, finds here a very rich and fertile theme that enables us to come to an understanding of Christ through the community, through the Church.

Another characteristic of this gospel is that it is very sacramental. Saint John's gospel is a gospel of signs and wonders, thus Jesus is presented as the culmination of the Old Testament but at the same time he is the great sign of the redeeming power which he brought to the world. The sacraments of our Church find their reason for being in the gospel of Saint John.

Finally, the gospel of John is very original in presenting us with a present eschatology. Several times we have spoken about this word *eschatology* which means the last things, that which is definitive, the end of history, the definitive Kingdom of Christ. All of this is eschatology. But this reality is not presented to us as some hope that is realized after our death, as an eternity that we are waiting to be accomplished. The gospel of Saint John presents the definitive Kingdom as present in history. We are making that Kingdom present by our actions or we are impeding the presence of the Kingdom by our rejection. The definitive fate of humanity is being elaborated in this eschatology that Jesus, through his divine presence and through his Church, has planted as a seed in history. All of this shows us that reading the gospel of Saint John from the perspective of the

person of the Divine Savior of the World alerts us to the fact that our ecclesial community of the Archdiocese has the seeds for a solution to her problems and therefore we must have hope. What is lacking is the knowledge of how to understand this sign and incarnate it in our country through the lives of the people of El Salvador, through the lives of Christians.

Life of the Church

Therefore I want to begin today by looking at the community that is involved in this reflection. First we are dealing with the Church of today, led by John Paul II, the first Polish Pope, whom the world is still coming to know but who is bringing forth initiatives and light that guides the People of God who ought to revere, respect, and love the person of the representative of Christ on earth, the Pope. During this past week, John Paul II has confirmed his trip to the United Nations on October 2nd. Let us accompany him with our prayers so that as Pope Paul VI said on his bold trip to the United Nations: *this is the person of the Church sent to all people.*¹ The United Nations is the gathering of all people. Hopefully this will be an opportunity to listen to and give homage to the message of Christ, present in the world in 1979, Christ, the light of all nations. The Pope has asked for hospitality for the Viet Nam refugees². You know that many are dying as they flee Viet Nam. Ships are picking up refugees but there is no place for them to go. More than ever before it is necessary that the voice of the Pope be heeded because there are so many refugees who are in need of assistance. While we might not be able to do much with regard to this situation, nonetheless we are able to listen to the call that the Pope made to our sisters and brothers in Nicaragua and which we spoke about last week.

In our Archdiocese we are preparing for the celebration of our patronal feast of the Divine Savior. Msgr. Modesto López has already announced that we will have a novena and we hope to transmit this on radio at 5:00pm. The spirit of this novena and feast is not one of worldly joy. Our people are enduring too much suffering to be thinking about fiestas. Let us not slap our suffering country in the face with dances and floats and queens. There will be a time for all of this when peace returns to our nation. But today our people are experiencing great suffering and our nation expects us to be in prayer, in atonement, asking the Lord to resolve the great problems that we confront. Let us not fall asleep as foolish people who do not see the reality that is in front of us: a very short fuse that can explode from one moment to the next. Let us try to resolve these great problems. This is the spirit of the August celebrations of the Church.

As everyone expects, on August 5th at 4:00pm we will have the famous bajada (descent) procession that commemorates Jesus' burial and his three days in the tomb. I also want to tell you that a very beautiful tradition has also begun. On the morning of August 5th, the Apostolate of Prayer will gather together in the Basilica to review and plan new programs of a spiritual nature for the country. This organization invites you to come to the Basilica next Sunday to spend some time reflecting with them. Father Santiago Garrido will be there and today he is celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of his priestly ordination. Since Father Santiago is a Jesuit, we are going to celebrate this anniversary on July 31st, the feast of Saint Ignatius. Father Santiago, I know that you are listening to me and so in the name of the people gathered here in the Cathedral, so many of them your friends, and all of us your Christian sisters and brothers, we offer today our prayers and our Mass for you on the occasion of your fiftieth anniversary.

On August 6th we will celebrate the Eucharist at 8:00am and we want to extend an invitation to all the choirs of the diocese. We invite all the different voices from the communities to come together, just like today when we have with us the choir from Tacachico. Voices from the rural areas, voices of our people because as we said at the beginning of our celebration, we speak to the

God of our people in the language of our people --- guitars, accordions, all the different instruments that accompany our people in song so that we can make our celebration of August 6th in front of the Cathedral a true feastday celebration in honor of our Divine Patron. Let us place all our hope in him.

Present with us today are representatives from the community of San Antonio Abad and they will bring up the offerings at the appropriate time.

We greet all the communities and hope that they are present next Monday as we honor the patron of our Archdiocese. The Cathedral is a sign of unity and hope and faith. The Cathedral is also the teacher of the Diocese because the bishop, despite his defects, is the sign of the teaching authority and unity. The Cathedral is the cathedra and therefore we ought to love it. I take this opportunity to ask all of you to help us complete the construction of this building that was begun by Bishop Chávez. This Cathedral is the symbol of the Archdiocese and the seat of our divine patron. This is a wonderful opportunity to move forward the construction that has been advanced thanks to the coordination of our beloved rector of the Cathedral, Msgr. Modesto López.

The priests already know that there will be no clergy meeting in August so that all are able to participate in the Eucharist on the 6th of August here in the cathedral.

We lament the fact that *Orientación* was unable to be published this week because of technical difficulties with the machinery. Hopefully with the help of God we will be able to offer to you an extraordinary edition of our newspaper next week.

Speaking about the press I want to congratulate the reporters who will be celebrating their special day on July 31st. May the Lord continue to inspire you and give you righteousness and above all courage --- the courage that is demanded of you because a reporter either speaks the truth or else he is not a reporter. I also want to thank the Independent Newspaper Agency (API) for their kindness in giving wide coverage to the homily that I preached last week. I believe it was four complete pages, truly something extraordinary since we can say that no one is a prophet in their own land.⁽¹⁾ While I see that my poor homilies are published in French and in other places outside the country (they send me copies of these publications), yet here in our country they find no echo in our press which we have already said ought to give testimony to the truth. These homilies want to be the voice of the people, the voice of those who are voiceless. Therefore, without a doubt, they find no favor with those who already have a voice. This poor voice, however, will find echo in those who, as I said before, love the truth and speak the truth to our beloved people. I was greatly surprised to see that in the theological publication, *Selecciones de Teología*³, among the scientific articles that were published there appeared one of the homilies that was proclaimed in the Cathedral. It is clear that the Church needs those who speak on her behalf: *Orientación*, YSAX --- let us continue to support these means of communication.

Father Astor has not been allowed to enter the country. He was told that this was the result of *higher orders*. Father, so beloved in the colony of Santa Lucía, has become an unexpected exile. He will be leaving Guatemala and traveling to the United States.

We will celebrate the forty day anniversary of the death of Father Palacios tomorrow, Monday, at 7:00pm in the church of El Calvario in Santa Tecla. We want this to be a liturgy of atonement for the city where he was assassinated. I hope that the city will respond to this act of atonement because their streets have been stained with the blood of a priest.

Some good news: the Passionist Fathers have returned to the Archdiocese and are going to establish a house of formation. The Lord has blessed them with many vocations from El Salvador and they will be joined by a group of seminarians from Spain.

We have visited or we will visit the following communities that I have the pleasure of greeting today: Santa Lucía in Ilopango, the Minor Seminary in Chalatenango, Apopa, Santiago Aculhuaca, Colegio Don Bosco, Marriage Encounters in El Instituto Rinaldi. We will soon visit San Antonio Los Ranchos, Chalatenango, Arcatao y Los Sitios, Dulce Nombre de María --- these communities already know the day that I will visit them. Hopefully military barriers will not prevent the people from exercising their most sacred rights: the right to believe, the right to meet. The state of siege should not become a pretext to prevent people from exercising these rights. We hope that these gatherings will have more success than that of San Miguel de Mercedes which was closed off by the Security Forces.

This is the community that has come together for reflection. This is the Archdiocese and these are the people and the realities of our life. My word is directed to this ecclesial community. My homily wants to be nourishment that the pastor provides for the People of God. If from the People of God this moves out to people in general, then blessed be God because they are not upset by these words.

In Gotera the people are able to hear YSAX very clearly and because they are able to listen to our transmissions several *campesinos* have been beaten. I want to remind the Security Forces that it is not a crime to listen to the radio. If it were, then high government officials would not be listening to this homily --- and I know that they are listening. May the Security Forces learn how to respect the *campesinos* who are listening to my voice and may the high powers of the state set an example. There is no sin or evil in anything that I am saying and the words that I preach today are very much needed by all the people of Salvador.

Today's readings, especially the sixth chapter of Saint John's gospel which we began to read today, provides us with the title of this homily that is dedicated to the Divine Savior: The Divine Savior, the solution of all our problems. I will develop the following points: First, the multiplication of loaves, a sign of the messianic kingdom; Second, the messianic kingdom is signified in the multiplication of the loaves; Third, the collaboration of women and men in the construction of the Kingdom.

The multiplication of loaves, a sign of the problems and solutions of Christ

The first idea is that the multiplication of the loaves is a sign of the messianic kingdom. What is the sign? The seminarian has already spoken about this before reading the gospel: a problem without a human solution: a multitude hungry for bread.

The human solution: they are a helpless people! Philip calculates the cost: *two hundred days' wages worth of food would not be enough for each of them to have a little bit* (2). Andrew, aware of the food at hand says: *what good are these for so many* (3). Jesus' response: going beyond technical calculations, he performs a miracle: he takes the bread in his hands, blesses it and personally begins to share the bread(4). But before doing this he asks for collaboration: *there is a boy who has five barley loaves and two fish: but what good are these for so many* (5). Jesus says: *bring them*. So the young boy had to detach himself from those goods which were meant to sustain him. He needs this food and yet he gives it to Jesus. As a result of this action Jesus multiplies the loaves and the fish. Everyone is satisfied and twelve baskets of leftovers are gathered up.(6)

Events of the week

We want to apply this problem to the reality of our nation. Incidentally, the API that I spoke about before published a commentary that serves as a way of applying the gospel to El Salvador. In one of their commentaries yesterday they wrote: *There is a general opinion that the political upheavals have increased in an alarming way and been translated into greater hunger and misery for those sectors that live on the margins of society and cannot rely on daily sustenance or the necessary medicines that will enable them to cure their children. These people have received a series of humiliations that have worsened their conditions as human persons.* In other words, the multiplication of bread that was provoked because of the hunger of the multitudes is also a miracle that El Salvador asks for. Literally, here in El Salvador there are many people suffering from hunger!

The politicians of our land say that this economic misery will not be resolved unless, first of all, the political problem which engulfs our country is first resolved. If the political crisis is resolved then there will be confidence and trust and support that will enable the other problems to be resolved. If not, all the governmental projects will be totally useless and become like false sounding alarms⁴. I am happy that this reality is known because the Church has pointed this out for a long time. A social and political transformation is necessary. The Church is not going to do this but points out the urgency of doing this --- and those who are responsible for all of this must act.

It is sad to see how often the tragic realities of the people are so easily spoken of with optimism. Commenting on the cessation of the state of siege, the President states: *the right and the respect of their freedom is in the hands of the people.* He then went on to say: *I am filled with satisfaction when I see the understanding with which the people have received the government's disposition to return to them the complete exercise of their human rights which were withdrawn because of the Law of a State of Siege as a means to counteract the wave of violence that prevailed for a little more than two months*⁵. Why does he speak in the past about events that are a present reality? Why make illusions that the State of Siege was some type of medicine and not something that made our situation even worse? Why not keep in mind that now when, thanks to God, this pretext for molesting the people has been eliminated then people's rights should in reality be respected and guaranteed? I would say that today is the opportunity for the government to make credible their plans for the liberation of the country. If the cessation of the State of Siege does not become some type of romanticism but rather if constitutional guarantees are returned to the people, guarantees such as freedom of expression, freedom to gather and migrate, then the government can once again gain credibility. We also ask that all those who are in exile be allowed to return and that those who have disappeared now appear ... let us know something about this situation.*

The fact is the threats of the White Warriors Union have continued. For example the professors Alberto Salvador Palacios, Saúl Villalta, and Nelson Martínez have come to the Chancery and spoken about these threats. They have said that if anything happens to them they have already pointed out those who are responsible for this to the authorities and ORDEN in San Matías. It is ridiculous to read the material of the White Warriors Union. They say: *there are guerrillas here! There are subversives!* and these words were directed against the Novitiate of the Somascan Fathers. Father Cataldo Papagno, in the name of the Somascan community, has written a letter to the President of the Republic and the Ministers of Defense and Interior, telling them: *There are no subversives here. My religious community is made up of Somascan priests of Italian origin. There are five students from El Salvador studying philosophy, two novices from El Salvador and one novice from Mexico. In light of these accusations of subversion, we state that we are doing nothing but fulfilling the pastoral guidelines of the Second Vatican Council which the Archdiocese is trying*

to put into practice. Father Papagno asks for protection and in a certain sense is saying: if something happens to us, you are responsible.

I also want to express my full solidarity with those persons who have been threatened and make an urgent appeal to the White Warriors Union: *Enough! Enough playing with the lives of people in El Salvador!* And if, as people believe, there is an alliance between the White Warriors Union and official forces, then it is in their hands to stop these threats that are a true abuse of human life. People can no longer live with tranquility.*

The panorama that surrounds the Divine Savior in the multiplication of the loaves is our national reality and that reality involves the continuation of arrests despite the fact that there is no longer a State of Siege. On July 25th the following people were arrested: José Isidro Chicas, Sabas Concepción Claros, her son, Guillermo Claros Flores, Napoleón Velásquez, Facundo Hernández, Felicitó Vigil and another person with the same last name was arrested by the head of the police station in San Francisco de Gotera and handed over to the National Guard in the same town. The visit from his family was very impressive. Imagine what it costs a poor person, carrying a child in her arms because the child could not be left in a secure place, to come from Gotera to tell me: *Our situation is hopeless and we can no longer live in our homes because these are the object of constant leveling and searches. We have to sleep in the mountains, outdoor, because if we remain in our homes we run the risk of being arrested by military personnel who are continually moving through this area. We come here also to denounce another abuse in another village.*

On July 26th José Evaristo Cabrera from Villa Victoria was arrested. I hope that his mother is not harmed by mentioning her here but her testimony is very touching. She has been unable to sleep from the time that José disappeared. *Therefore I come to you and ask for your help and to inform you about this new injustice. I pray that the Guardia will set free this young man who is so dedicated to his work on the farm. Why are the hearts of people who cause so much harm not moved by these words?*

The disappearances continue. Miguel Angel Terezón: we denounced this case last week and asked that his goods be respected. In spite of our denunciation his workshop has been sacked and several machines in the office destroyed --- this is the workshop where this young man earned his living. His car has also been destroyed. Hopefully Mr. Terezón and his family are able to return quickly and find peace --- but we know that is only possible if those who are responsible will cease committing these injustices. Also another case, Carlos Antonio Mendoza Valencia. His sister said to me: "Each time the situation is more difficult. We can find no solution to such great injustice. Neither lawyers nor the military have agreed to hear us, only faith in God upholds us." And this is why I am speaking of the God who can find solutions, just as He solved the crisis of hunger, if we fulfill the conditions He asks.

I want to speak in a special way about the case of Gonzalo Segundo Merino who was arrested by the Guardia and what has not been seen in so many cases of abuse is that the person involved has been criminally denounced before the courts. The judge involved in this case has already had his family threatened but since this is the first case of this kind we want to congratulate the court for doing this! Because of the courage of this letter I want to read it to you as a wonderful example of how our citizens can act. The letter is addressed to the Supreme Court of Justice, Dr. Rogelio Chávez. *My brother, Gonzalo Segundo Merino, was arrested in Tejutepeque on July 3rd of this year by six uniformed agents of the National Guard. He was resting at the time of his arrest. The arrest was witnessed by many persons, especially his family with whom he was resting. I personally saw my brother in the offices of the National Guard in Tejutepeque but as is so often the case they*

*denied having him there. I have used personal evidence but all this has been in vain. Finally with fear and trembling for the safety of my family because on numerous occasions the parents of those who have been arrested do not denounce these cases because they fear persecution for speaking the truth and for seeking the freedom of a loved one, I denounced this criminal action in the court of Ilobasco. I hope that you and the Supreme Court, who are entrusted with the supreme administration of justice before such clear and unjust acts, will take on a proper and courageous attitude, an attitude that is in accord with the sacred function that you ought to fulfill. Sincerely.** We have said many times to the President of the Supreme Court that his role in the country is transcendental and that history will speak of his negligence in such urgent matters.

The bodies of people who have been arrested and then assassinated by the Security Forces continue to appear. On July 20th, above the Izalco bypass, the body of Pedro Cortés was found. He had been arrested on July 17th in Santo Domingo de Guzmán. The body of Celso Cruz who was arrested on July 18th was found in the same area. I have here a written testimony and even though it is not well written, perhaps the work of one of our *campesinos*, but the conclusion of the letter is most eloquent: *May the Lord, our God, give us great strength in order to establish a kingdom of peace and justice on earth where we can all love one another as sisters and brothers. Some day may the clouds disappear and the sun of justice shine.*

At the last minute the case of Alejandro Ochoa was presented to me. This young man was arrested in the village of San Francisco Agua Agria and his body was identified by his mother who is hospitalized as a result of this frightening trauma.

We could also mention here --- but I have already spoken too long --- the different labor conflicts that are part of the problem that I am trying to present here before the throne of the Divine Savior of our country in order to proclaim to you the words of the apostles: *Look at our limitations, Lord! Two hundred days wages for so many people? What can we do with five loaves?* (7). What can we do with the humble voice of these *campesinos* who want the sun of justice to shine? This is the voice of our people! We cannot ignore their voice! Therefore, we proclaim these words in light of the panorama of our Church that, thanks to God, grows in faith and hope but that is surrounded by a world of darkness, injustice and crime.

The messianic sign is signified in the multiplication of the loaves

My dear sisters and brothers, members of the People of God, the multiplication of bread comes about because Jesus wanted to feed the people. This is a sign, but what is the meaning of this sign? My second point: there are two interpretations of Jesus' action of resolving a problem of hunger with the collaboration of other people.

The first interpretation is temporal and political. Those who followed Christ with an imperfect faith said: *This is truly a great prophet who is able to feed us* (8). They wanted to make him king because they wanted immediate solutions: *he will give us food whenever we are hungry*. The people were content with worldly solutions.

The other interpretation is one that we are going to focus on today, the theological interpretation that Saint John presents to us in the fourth gospel. As we said before, Saint John's interpretation has ecclesiological aspects: Christ-Church, one single life. In the account of the multiplication of loaves, we see clearly that John is resolving a present problem and wants to refer to the Church, united with Christ.

For example, the mountain is a symbol of Mount Sinai and Moses (9). Moses, who saved the people, is today Jesus. The mountain where the law of God was promulgated is the gospel that Jesus preaches is the Church. The mountain where Jesus continues to preach is a symbol of the mountain where Moses guided the people, a symbol of the Divine Savior who continues to be hope for the people of El Salvador.

Another sign that Saint John refers to with a clear ecclesiological purpose is the Passover: *the Jewish feast of Passover was near* (10). This existential relationship brings us to the understanding that for Saint John, Israel's feasts were an expression of the people, the hopes of the people which were later transferred to Christian women and men. The Christian Passover, the Eucharist, is precisely the Church in action. Why are we here this morning in the Cathedral? We are here to celebrate the Passover. Each Sunday is Passover, the resurrection of the Lord. Since John mentions the fact that the multiplication of loaves occurred at a time when the feast of Passover was near, he is inviting us to live with an ecclesiological meaning: to be Church and from the Church where Jesus lives, to resolve our problems.

Today we see another wonderful sign: when the multiplication of loaves was completed, Jesus commanded the twelve to gather up the leftovers and they filled twelve baskets. (11) This is a symbol, a symbol of the hierarchic Church that collaborates with Christ in teaching, in distributing bread, in gathering together and in administering the sacraments. We see a beautiful gesture in the multiplication of loaves, a gesture repeated in the churches, a gesture that in a few moments we will witness as the bishop and his collaborators distribute bread and then gather up the leftovers so that nothing is lost and then guard it in the tabernacle where it continues to be multiplied. We will never lack bread as long as there is Christ and a Church that knows how to incarnate itself among the people, even during critical times.

In the theological signs of Saint John we see sacramental signs. Commentators on the sixth chapter of Saint John point out that he is the only one who does not present us an account of the last supper. In his gospel, John does not narrate the account that appears in the other gospels as the last supper; he does not narrate the institution of the Eucharist. He presents us with a wonderful farewell discourse but does not recount Jesus taking bread and changing it into his body. He does not do this because he saw what had been written in the Synoptic Gospels and felt it was not necessary. But it was necessary to expound on this idea and so the sixth chapter of Saint John is his Eucharistic account. Thus, the account of the multiplication of loaves has a beautiful Eucharistic meaning: the Passover becomes Christian. The lamb that Moses commanded to be offered will no longer be an animal. Jesus becomes the Lamb of God who is nailed to the cross and whose body and blood will be nourishment for the redeemed people.

The selection of the loaves is a symbol of manna (12). Everything in this morning's account speaks about the Eucharist, especially the liturgical gestures of Jesus. My sisters and brothers, Jesus invites us to look beyond the altar. Do not look at me but through my poor human features discover the faith of you and me in the Eternal Priest who took bread in his hands, blessed it, and changed it into his body (13) and gave it to the people as nourishment and then gathered it up for future generations. These are the Eucharistic gestures of Jesus that the priest has the honor of repeating at the altar. You come here because through the bishop and priest you discover the majestic person of Christ, the Eternal Priest, offering bread and wine that you yourselves offer, that you yourselves will present at the Offertory Procession.

This transcendental interpretation is telling us that Christ will resolve the hunger of El Salvador, that Christ will resolve the injustices of El Salvador, and that he will shine forth like the sun that the

campesino in Sonsonate wants to see, the sun of justice and truth. The day that we interpret his message as not only a message of temporal liberation but a transcendent liberation, then our faith in Christ will not be like those followers with imperfect faith because they were given food or because Jesus offered them immediate solutions. During these next three Sundays we will continue to learn about the mentality of Christ.

But right now, let it be clear, my sisters and brothers, that Christ wants to feed us, wants to be with us, and is concerned about us. How could Christ not weep when a mother weeps because her child has disappeared? How could Christ not suffer when a person dies as a result of torture? How could Christ not suffer when the Security Forces bring our children to prison, mock them, and as a consequence leave our families unprotected? All of these crimes must be satisfied!

Jesus invokes eternal justice --- not like the justice of this earth where even though you petition the President of the Supreme Court, everything stays the same. He is not Christ. But there is a Christ above him, who will demand an accounting of him and will demand an accounting of all the accomplices in this unjust situation in El Salvador. Thus Jesus invokes a situation that is beyond history and so I want to say to you, my sisters and brothers who suffer, whose homes are unprotected, who are imprisoned and tortured, do not lose hope! Christ is with us! The Divine Savior of the world is here like he was in the midst of the multitude that was hungry. He knows the situation and will resolve our problems. Let us hold out a little longer because the solution will come! Jesus can resolve all of this!

Sisters and brothers, in the face of this transcendent and immanent message – transcendent because it goes beyond reality; immanent because it is within that reality - which is Christ here and now but also beyond and in eternity. It is dangerous to lose this balance between immanent and transcendent. From this comes a false interpretation of today's miracle and of the gospel which is called temporal reductionism, contrasted with spiritual reductionism that is also wrong.

Let me explain myself here because this is very important. It is being said that the Pope is proclaiming a type of spiritual over simplification and I want to defend the Pope in light of these malicious statements in our environment. The Pope is not asking his priests to practice spiritual over simplification and the proof is in the fact that Paul VI spoke about evangelization in today's world and used a phrase that I hope is also published by those who wage campaigns of slander.* The Pope stated: *when preaching liberation and associating herself with those who are working and suffering for it, the Church is certainly not willing to restrict her mission only to the religious field and dissociate herself from man's temporal problems* (14).

In my Pastoral Letter I say: *Even though popular political organizations abandon the Church and criticize her, the Church will continue to support all that is just in these organizations.* The Church accompanies them* because I, like Paul VI and John Paul II, am convinced that *the Church must proclaim liberation and accompany people in their liberating efforts. The Church cannot allow her mission to be limited to the religious sphere and become disinterested in the temporal problems of women and men.* (15) Can we be any clearer! The Church cannot become disinterested in these matters and so to those who publish cleverly manipulated texts, I invite you to honestly publish the whole text of the Pope's message to the priests in Mexico.

The Pope did say to the priests in Mexico: *Be careful about temporal over simplification.* This is certain and if you want another text to publish I offer you my own Pastoral Letter where I am in agreement with this statement and say the same to my priests: *be careful about temporal over simplification.* I told the priests that the indispensable service of the priest, the first objective of

their vocation, is to be animators and guides in the faith and justice that is demanded by the great Christian principles that I remind them of⁶.

I do not want to go on at length here but let me point out to you #101 and 102 of my Pastoral Letter⁷ because these are words that merit being published and not mutilated in the way that the words of John Paul II have been mutilated. The thought of John Paul II is mutilated when he is presented as one who orients the priests to become so spiritual that they become unmindful of the realities of the earth. Naturally this is of interest to those who believe they own the earth because they do not want the gospel to touch the things of this earth. The proof is seen in the fact that John Paul II, when he spoke to the bishops in Puebla, proclaimed the following words as his command to the Latin American Episcopate: *Who can deny that today there are individual persons and civil authorities who are violating fundamental rights of the human person with impunity? I refer to such rights as the right to be born, the right to life, the right to responsible procreation, the right to work, the right to peace, freedom and social justice, and the right to participate in making decisions that affect peoples and nations. And what are we to say when we run up against various forms of collective violence, such as racial discrimination against individuals and groups and the physical and psychological torturing of prisoners and political dissidents? The list grows when we add examples of abduction and of kidnapping for the sake of material gain which represent such a traumatic attack on family life and the social fabric. We cry out once more: Respect the human being who is the image of God*⁸. Listen to these words: *Evangelize so that this might become a reality, so that the Lord may transform hearts and humanize political and economic systems, with the responsible commitment of human beings as the starting point. Pastoral commitments in this field must be nurtured with a correct Christian conception of liberation: The Church ... has the duty of proclaiming the liberation of millions of human being ... the duty of helping to bring about this liberation*⁹. He also stated: *The Church's teaching, which says that there is a social mortgage on all private property, takes on an urgent character*¹⁰. These words of the Pope cannot be ignored by those who present the Pope as one who proclaims spiritual over simplification. See why I tell you that you have to learn how to read with critical judgment, especially in an environment that so cleverly distorts even the most holy discourses.

Therefore we recommend balance in our present pastoral ministry. Paul VI says that evangelization is a natural work of the Church and that we should not await human promotion as a result of anthropological reasoning because the injustices that the Church denounces are not abstract but concrete injustices inflicted upon concrete human beings. The gospel of Christ's charity demands that we love others as we love ourselves and it would not be true love if we preached spiritual theories and did not work on behalf of the promotion of the human person.

The collaboration Christ requires from us

Let us remember that Christ has the solution to our problems and he alone has the solution. Therefore I return once again to invoke John Paul II because I am concerned about applying his thoughts here. I never want to betray the Pope, never. God free me from this! I want to be his echo, his voice. I always remember with joy and gratitude the time when he had recently received the miter (today he does not wear a tiara because with simplicity the Roman Pontiff has also made a preferential option for the poor). With his simple miter, like any other bishop of the world, the Pope proclaimed the same words that all the bishops proclaim: *Open the doors to Christ! Politicians, businessmen, financiers, open the door to Christ. Only he has the words of eternal life.*¹¹ Jesus did not want to perform the miracle of the loaves alone. He began speaking with Philip and then asked for Andrew's opinion and then took the five loaves from the poor young man.

Here we look at the beautiful example of the first reading where a poor man brings in his knapsack barley loaves made from the first fruits and presents these to the prophet Elisha. God wants the participation of the people. Without the participation of people the problems of the nation will continue to be the same. Therefore, those who have governmental positions or economic power should not believe that they are gods* because the more they make themselves out to be gods and the more they make idols out of the false gods of this earth, the more repugnant they become to the true God. If they would become more humble and unite themselves to God, they would solve our problems.

For this reason we call people to conversion. The language of the Cathedral has never been one of hatred but is one of love. Mother Church speaks like mothers when they become angry and correct but always love --- they do not want bad children but good children. Because the Church is a mother she speaks to the rich and powerful: *Be converted, my children! Be converted! Only Christ has the solution! Unite yourselves to Christ and if you want to find Christ you will find him caring in a preferential way for the poor. Do not make laws that defend the minority of people but enact laws that defend the poor.* Create attitudes that allow all people to enter into dialogue with you and not only those who think like yourselves! Allow the campesinos to speak with you. They are dying of hunger and dying of hunger to organize themselves! Know that they want to organize themselves not to become subversive but to survive.**

My sisters and brothers, in a word, the wonderful message of the today's gospel (and today we have only reflected on the gospel) is telling us: the multiplication of loves is the sign of a problem that only Jesus can resolve but he desires the collaboration of women and men. We have to reflect on the mentality of Christ in order not to lose ourselves in politics that are simply worldly and in order to join our own liberating efforts with the universal liberation of Jesus Christ. Only in this way can we celebrate the feast of the Divine Savior of the world! He does not give us liberation in order to remain as a king on this earth. Flee from earthly solutions! The Lord takes up all of these in order, as I said in my Pastoral Letter, to incorporate them into the great liberation, the transcendence that is his eternally, the transcendence that makes us truly and profoundly happy. Let us prepare our spirit in this way so that we might celebrate the approaching feast of the Divine Savior. So be it!*

¹ *Message to humanity*, [9]. Discourse of Paul VI before the General Assembly of the United Nations (4 October 1965).

² See Sunday Allocation of John Paul II (22 July 1979), *Osservatore Romano*, 29 July 1979.

³ See "Un asesinato que nos habla de la resurrección", *Selecciones de Teología* 70 (1979), pp. 184-190.

⁴ Bulletin of the *Agencia Periodística Independiente*, 28 July 1979.

⁵ *La Prensa Gráfica*, 26 July 1979.

⁶ See *La Iglesia y las organizaciones políticas populares*. Third pastoral letter of Mons. Oscar A. Romero, archbishop of San Salvador, and first of Mons. Arturo Rivera Damas, bishop of Santaigo de María (6 August 1978), 102.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Discourse of John Paul II at the inauguration of the Third General Conference of Latinamerican Bishops at Puebla (28 January 1979), *Osservatore Romano*, 4 February 1979.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ See Homily of John Paul II at the official inauguration of his pontificate (22 October 1978), *Osservatore Romano*, 29 October 1978.