

THE FAMILY, SOURCE OF PEACE IN SOCIETY

**Twenty-seventh Sunday of Ordinary Time
October 7, 1979**

Genesis 2:18-24

Hebrews 2:9-11

Mark 10:2-16

My dear sisters and brothers.

Saint Mark, the gospel that we have reflected on during this year, presents Jesus to us in a very difficult and very human situation. A man was unable to get along with his wife and defines this situation as a case of conscience as the rabbis discussed this problem among themselves. Jesus, who is present in the midst of society to point out the plan of God with regard to these human problems even when God's plan contradicts the plans of human beings, does not cease to preach to the people when confronted with the conflicting reasons of humanity. The gospel is present in all those areas where guidance is needed.

In the United States the Pope is Christ who passes through America as a pilgrim of peace. I say this because, today, I, like you, have seen in the media and have come to understand the significance of the Pope's trip to the United States: John Paul II is Christ today present in the midst of the great nation of the North, present in the midst of all their problems. Our whole Continent has seen Jesus passing by and I believe that this light is as clear as the gospel of Saint Mark that enlightens the problem of divorce and so we can say: there you have the everlasting word. All the pressing problems such as divorce that was a problem twenty centuries ago, even current problems such as human rights, government, social conflict, and people distancing themselves from one another --- all these problems have no other solution but that which is found in the divine Word that has been preserved by an institution founded by Christ and present in the midst of the world.

The visit of the Pope to American soil is wonderful. It has been called the greatest news event in the history of the world. Never before have fourteen thousand reporters covered an event as they are doing today. Three thousand reporters covered the return of Apollo 11 from its trip to the moon and six thousand reporters covered the last Olympic Games. Who could have imagined that the Pope's trip would double and triple the number of reporters who covered the trip to the moon and the last Olympics which moved international fanatics of these games? In the United States, where everything is measured (and this is a curious fact) the applause given to the Pope has broken all records. No rock star has received the applause that was given to John Paul II by the countless number of young women and men and by the millions of faithful¹. For those who are scandalized by the act of applause, there, in the person of the Pope in the United States, you have your answer.*

While we want to move beyond the spectacular characteristics of this event yet we must not forget these because they confirm us in a great truth, namely, that the gospel is always good news and that the Church is always news. Because the Church's teaching is light and raises up the human person, we can say that the Pope's visit is not only the greatest news event in history but also a pastoral act of faith and hope, a spiritual action that perhaps no one has defined more beautifully than the wife of President Carter who welcomed the Pope and said: *At a time when materialism and*

selfishness threaten to overwhelm spiritual values your visit reminds us that life's true meaning springs from the heart and from the soul, from purposes and beliefs larger than our individual lives. We hear in her words the idea of transcendence, that which the human person cannot take in and the human mind cannot explain, religion.

How fruitful and opportune is the message of the Pope's visit! It would be wonderful to analyze the Pope's thoughts but this is not the objective of this homily. Nevertheless, by presenting the Pope in the way which I have done, we can see that the Pope is not only Christ passing through our land but like Jesus, teaches us the true paths of peace. The Pope came to America because he wanted to continue the pilgrimage of peace of Pope Paul VI. I would like to highlight two of his themes and even though these are not the only themes (perhaps there are other more important themes), but at this time in our history it seems very appropriate to say that the Pope points out the defense of human rights as a path to peace.* Like Jesus, he also points out to us, as Mrs. Carter said, objectives and beliefs that are greater than ourselves, thus inviting us to a moral purity. Thus honesty is the other path to peace. I believe we can summarize the message of Pope John Paul II in two chapters: a defense of human rights and a bold and courageous honesty. He points these things out to a nation that might be characterized by loose moral behavior.

The defense of human rights provides a wonderful guarantee to the Archbishop of El Salvador. In the United Nations he said: *It is a question of the highest importance that in internal social life, as well as in institutional life, all human beings in every nation and country should be able to enjoy effectively their full rights under any political regime or system. Only the safeguarding of this real completeness of rights for every human being without discrimination can ensure peace at its very roots.*² In the same international forum he pointed out that the Declaration of Human Rights *has struck a real blow against the many deep roots of war, since the spirit of war, in its basic primordial meaning, springs up and grows to maturity where the inalienable rights of man are violated.*³ This is a new perspective, profoundly current and more profound and radical than the cause of peace. It is a perspective that sees the origin of war, in more complex forms, rooted in injustice considered in its distinct dimensions. Have we not said the same thing? Have we not said that the cause of all the violations in El Salvador is that which the Pope refers to as *the root of all war?* As John the Baptist said: *unless the ax is laid to the root of the tree violence will spring up* (1) and if we do not use the remedy of justice then we will soon have to confront the creature called war.

The Pope also points out one of the roots that is a grave threat against such rights, namely, the unequal distribution of material goods in situations characterized by injustice and social harm: *Disturbing factors are frequently present in the form of the frightful disparities between excessively rich individuals and groups on the one hand, and on the other hand the majority made up of poor or indeed of the destitute, who lack food and opportunities for work and education, and are in great numbers condemned to hunger and disease* ... It is no secret that the abyss separating the minority of the excessively rich from the multitude of the destitute is a very grave symptom in the life of any society. This must also be said with even greater insistence with regard to the abyss separating countries and regions of the earth. The only way to overcome this serious disparity between areas of satiety and areas of hunger and depression is through coordinated cooperation by all countries.*⁴

We could also cite in this chapter on human rights his condemnation of violence: *Every life is sacred and assassination is assassination regardless of its motive or objective. Violence is unworthy of the human person.*⁵ The Pope gives us great satisfaction as he ratifies our preferential option for the poor. In a nation of wealth he said: *My heart reaches out in a special way to those who are poor and those who suffer and those who are alone in the midst of the busy metropolitan*

centers.⁶ Yesterday at the United Nations and the Organization of American States it was Jesus who passed by. It could be said that the Pope underlines for Latin America characteristics that confirm the pastoral ministry of our Archdiocese when he said: *There are no differences between your countries that cannot be peacefully overcome.* He cites as an example his intervention in Latin America. It is wonderful to think that before all the paths of peace have been tried, recourse to violence is illicit. The Pope assures us that there are still paths to peace and negotiation and reason and that we must look for the solution of our great crises on those paths and do so with urgency and speed.⁷

With words that are very much his own the Pope again condemned the theory of National Security at the Organization of American States when he said that: *If certain ideologies and certain ways of interpreting legitimate concern for national security were to result in subjugating to the State man and his rights and dignity, they would to that extent cease to be human and would be unable to claim without gross deception any Christian reference**. Before the people of Latin America he once again assured them that: *In the Church's thinking it is a fundamental principle that social organization is at the service of man and not vice versa* and defined the dignity of the human person, whether they be workers or *campesinos* or the humblest people among us, by saying that there are no first and second class citizens but all people are children of God and should be treated with dignity.⁸

Speaking about the relations between the Church and state he said: *All that you do for the human person will halt violence and the threats of subversion and destabilization. For, by accepting the courageous revision demanded by this single fundamental point of view, namely, the welfare of man --- or, let us say, of the person in the community --- which must, as a fundamental factor in the common good constitute the essential criterion for all programs, systems, and regimes, you direct the energies of your peoples toward the peaceful satisfaction of their aspirations. The Holy See will always be happy to make its own disinterested contribution to this work.* And the local Churches, the dioceses of the Americas will do the same according to their various responsibilities, favouring the progress of the human person, their dignity and rights so that they can serve the earthly city in its promotion and through its legitimate authorities. In other words, the Church, working on behalf of human rights and denouncing the abuses of authority, is fulfilling her mission within the limits of her competency.

The full religious freedom that they [the local Churches in the Americas] ask for is in order to serve, not in order to oppose the legitimate autonomy of civil society and of its own means of action. It is clear that when the freedom of the Church is respected and civil authority serves the interests of the common good, then there will be no conflict between Church and state. This is the freedom that the Church requests and her freedom will never be used for subversion or to oppose any legitimate authority but rather will respect and collaborate with every legitimate authority but always on behalf of the people that the Church and the state must serve.

Therefore the Pope went on to say: *The more all citizens are able to exercise habitually their freedoms in the life of the nation, the more readily will the Christian communities be able to dedicate themselves to the central task of evangelization, namely, the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the source of life, strength, justice and peace.*⁹ In other words, if the Church is now involved in this awesome task of defending the human rights of people who are poor and also involved in the task of giving voice to the anguish that she hears, it is because today people do not rejoice in these freedoms. The Pope spoke about these realities and for my part, in my attempt to be faithful to the Pope, I reaffirm these words: *There will not be so many conflicts and the Church will be able to dedicate herself directly to the task of evangelization when the individuals that God has*

*entrusted to her rejoice within their own country in the legitimate freedoms that the Church today ought to struggle for in order to fulfill her mission of evangelization.**

Therefore the Pope has given us a great example and his presence and language in front of the United Nations is justified. As the Pope said: *The religious and moral dimension*¹⁰ of the relations between States and people. We must bear this in mind. The Pope says: *We must not confuse politics with those religious and moral aspects with which the Church and the Gospel ought to enlighten, even in the earthly city of humankind. Politics should also not be confused with the advantage of a few people who then trample upon the multitudes.*¹¹ These are mistaken concepts. True politics is concerned with the common good and in the name of the common good the gospel ought to speak up for all nations and for all women and men. The Pope spoke in pastoral and gospel language when he appeared before the political world at the United Nations and before the diplomats and politicians of the Organization of American States.

The Pope said that: The more all citizens are able to exercise habitually their freedoms in the life of the nation, the more readily will the Christian communities be able to dedicate themselves to the central task of evangelization, namely, the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the source of life, strength, justice, and peace. He preached the path of honesty and it is here where we return to encounter once again the gospel of Saint Mark. Jesus, in the gospel passage that was just read, touches upon the great problem that for me, at this time in our history as a nation, signifies great hope. Here I dedicate my poor words to you, beloved laity, you who live together as a family, you who as husbands must sustain your wives and children, you who when you leave this Church will return to your homes. I also dedicate my words to all of you who with the dreams of young women and men hope to form a home of your own and to you whom God has given the most precious gift that he could give: a participation in the love of God. Who does not experience themselves as capable of love? Is not family life simply a witness to the infinite love of God?

Thus the theme presented to us in Saint Mark's gospel today is that of monogamy in marriage. I entitle my homily: *the family, the source of peace for society*. I will develop the following points: First, marriage in the original plan of the Creator [The first reading takes us back to the time of Genesis]; Second, matrimony becomes obscured by the ill-will of people [here we look at the gospel where Jesus clarifies the fact that a husband could write a bill of divorce and dismiss his wife. This, however, obscured the plan of God because in the beginning it was not this way: *because of the hardness of your hearts Moses wrote you this commandment. But from the beginning of time it was not this way* (2)]; Third, marriage is redeemed and raised up to transcendence [the second reading is united with the gospel].

Marriage in the original plan of the Creator

The question was placed before Jesus: *Is it lawful for a husband to divorce his wife?* (3). This was a case that was discussed among the rabbis because in the Book of Deuteronomy Moses speaks about a permission, a custom that existed as the lesser evil, that permitted a husband to write a document of repudiation so that a repudiated woman would not simply be abandoned.(4) The objective of this document was one of religious legality. A man was separated from his wife and so when this woman had relations with another man she could not return to become the wife of her first husband. This legality offended God.

The question placed before Jesus was the following: *With regard to this situation that is so greatly discussed today, what do you say?* Jesus clearly stated: *Moses permitted this because of the hardness of your hearts* (5). That is, because it is a lesser evil. But this is not God's will. Today

we are going to place matrimony in its proper perspective, as God wanted: *in the beginning it was not this way*. In the beginning things were as they existed in the beautiful passage of Genesis that was read today, a passage that should not be read as some children's story as though God was making clay dolls and breathing life into these dolls. Rather this passage is a primitive way of speaking about the profound psychology of marriage.

We see God creating man and all the animals and asking man to name the animals. This is a cataloguing of all life that existed in the universe apart from man. Man did not find a being like himself among all the animals. So God said: *it is not good for man to be alone* (6). When the Second Vatican Council comments on the dignity of the human person, (7) it was stated that God did not create man as a solitary being but as one capable of entering into union with others and therefore God created woman as man's companion. Thus, by nature men and women are social beings and in marriage the primary cell of society comes to life.

In the book of Genesis we see that God creates woman from one of Adam's ribs. (8) This should not be interpreted literally but should be seen as a type of living parable that tells us that woman is part of the very life of man and together they form one single principle of life. There is a mutual attraction and according to the mind of God they become one flesh. Thus what God has joined together, no human being must separate. The sleep of Adam that is spoken about in Genesis (9) is an expression that is religious in nature indicating that we are in the presence of a divine action, the creating action of the Lord in forming the first woman, the first love that unites man and woman together. It is beautiful to reflect on the thought that matrimony arises from the initiative of God.

The Council states: *The well-being of the individual person and of human and Christian society is intimately linked with the healthy condition of that community produced by marriage and family ... Yet the excellence of this institution is not everywhere reflected with equal brilliance ... All these situations have produced anxiety of consciences. Yet, the power and strength of the institution of marriage and family can also be seen in the fact that time and again, despite the difficulties produced, the profound changes in modern society reveal the true character of this institution in one way or another* (10). In other words, the Council tells us that even though there have been many vicissitudes in history, yet from the first page of the Book of Genesis until now the institution of love between man and woman has always been preserved. When the sacrament of matrimony is celebrated, the priest reminds people that marriage is the only institution that was never abolished, not even at the time of the flood. Rather marriage has overcome the catastrophes of this world and, it seems to me, is maintained in the same way that occurs when a forest is being cleared. From the trees that are felled during the clearing of the forest, other trees return to life. According to the mind of God marriage will always exist even when people try to destroy such a sacred and noble institution. The Word of God will remain: *what God has joined together, no human being must separate* (11).

I would like to highlight the fact that matrimony in the present situation of Latin America is a beneficial institution and an important element for the necessary changes of our society. Puebla states (12): *To function well, society requires the same things as the home. It must form aware persons, united in the bonds of fraternity to foster their common development. Thus the prayer, work and educational activity of the family as a social cell must be geared to changing unjust structures through human communion and participation and through the celebration of the faith in daily life. In the mutual interaction that takes hold in the course of time between the Gospel and the concrete personal and social life of the human being* (13), *the family learns how to read and live the explicit message concerning the rights and duties of family life. Hence it denounces and*

announces; it commits itself to changing the world in a Christian sense and it contributes to progress, community life, the exercise of distributive justice, and peace.

In other words, the original plan of God in establishing the institution of marriage offers us, in the present situation of crisis that we now experience, a path to salvation in our homes. My sisters and brothers, as I said before, here I call upon all of you who are the creators of so many families and the architects of so many homes:

That every family in El Salvador may not to be a hindrance to the urgent changes that our society needs. No one marries another so that they alone might be happy. Marriage has a great social function and so it must be like a torch that enlightens its surroundings and other marriages and shows them the path to other forms of liberation. Men and women must go outside their homes and promote changes in the administration of justice and other necessary changes in the political and social arena, changes that will not occur if our families are opposed to such changes. This will be very easy when in the intimacy of family life parents form their children with a desire to be more rather than to have more (14), when parents form their children so that they do not collect more things but extend their hands, filled with things, to others. Children must be educated in love. The family is an institution of love and is giving, handing oneself over for the good of all and working together for communal happiness.*

This was marriage in the beginning when people were faithful to the command of God --- a harsh word but it must be said. Happiness and love are inseparable and therefore marriage has to be faithful to what God has joined together and no one should destroy that unity.(15)

Marriage is obscured by the ill will of people

The second point of our reflection. Christ's word: *Because of your hardness, Moses allowed.*

From the beginning John Paul II dedicated a great part of his message to defend the holiness of love from the ill-will of people. In Philadelphia he said: *In today's society, we see so many disturbing tendencies and so much laxity regarding the Christian view on sexuality that all have one thing in common: recourse to the concept of freedom to justify any behavior that is no longer consonant with the true moral order and the teaching of the Church*¹². There is so much to say here.

When the Second Vatican Council denounces the present situation of marriage (16), it says: *The dignity of these partnerships is not reflected everywhere, but is overshadowed by polygamy, the plague of divorce, so-called free love, and similar blemishes; furthermore, married love is too often dishonoured by selfishness, hedonism, and unlawful contraceptive practices.*

When Puebla describes the family situation of Latin America (17), some very painful elements are pointed out: *The family is one of the institutions that has been most influenced by the process of change in recent times ... The Church is aware that the more negative results of underdevelopment have had their repercussions on the family: truly a depressing indication of unhealthiness, poverty, and even misery, ignorance and illiteracy, inhuman housing conditions, chronic malnutrition, and countless other realities that are just as sad.*

The family also appears to be the victim of those who make idols of wealth and sex. (18) This is the great defect of our time when so many marriages disintegrate as a result of the idolatry of power and sex and wealth. When these relative values are made absolutes then the tenderness and sanctity of love, fidelity and matrimony become lost.

Contributing to this are unjust structures, especially the communications media. The media does so, not only with its messages about sex, profit, violence, power, and ostentatious display, but also with its contribution to the propagation of divorce, marital infidelity, abortion, and the acceptance of free love and pre-marital sex. (19)

*On every social level the family also suffers from the deleterious impact of pornography, alcoholism, drugs, prostitution, and white slavery as well as the problem of unwed mothers and abandoned children. With the failure of chemical and mechanical contraceptives, there has been a shift to human sterilization and induced abortion, for which insidious campaigns are employed (20). The Church will never cease to condemn practices that go against the life of unborn children -- - vicious policies that led a student at our university to state: *they are castrating our people.**

Jesus has said: *from the beginning of creation it was not this way (21).* All of this has resulted from the hardness of our hearts, from having made pleasure an idol and thus children become a disturbance and sex becomes an idol and people no longer live with a spirit of poverty but become involved in a consumer society and ostentatious living. The message of the Pope must be kept in mind if we want to have homes and families that truly transform society --- and it is urgent to transform society. The Pope addressed his message throughout the United States to young women and men and to all those who are involved in the cult of hedonism and pleasure which cannot be called freedom but rather must be seen as immoral behavior. Our morality and our honesty have to be examined so that we can restore to marriage its true originality that was given to it by God: a witness to the infinite love of God.¹³ The love of God is holy and the fidelity of God is most worthy of this infinite gift --- so worthy that God wanted to make a mirror that would reflect the beauty of love on earth and that mirror is holy matrimony.

Therefore, my sisters and brothers --- and excuse me for calling to mind here the Pope's message in an area that can be difficult to speak about because people do not want to hear these words --- I repeat that we, all of us, must demand that this situation of the family be raised up because this is so often a situation that is lightly passed over. In this way we can create a campaign for the redemption of the holy love of marriage and return to the original idea that God desired when he created the first man and woman and thought of all people so that they would love one another with the same love that he shared with his eternal family. The Pope said in Puebla that God is not an isolated being and therefore the human person is not meant to live in isolation but to live as a member of a family. People are called to a divine vocation to be joined together and fully participate in the joys of family life: beauty, unity, participation, life, happiness --- and the world is so lacking in these values.

Marriage redeemed and raised up to transcendence by Jesus

Finally, comparing the person of the Pope in the United States with the figure of Jesus, we see a priestly person, a person who lifts up in his sacred hands the divine values of marriage that have been trampled upon by so many people. He then redeemed these values and returned them to their original state. Thus the second reading allows me to make this third reflection. Saint Paul, if he is not the author of the letter to the Hebrews then whoever is the author, describes for us the culminating moment of Jesus' mission. The passion and death of Jesus have passed. Now he is risen and brings behind him all those who believed in him. He presents to the heavenly Father the whole human family that has been redeemed. Hopefully we are all among the number of blessed whom Saint Paul says: *He who consecrates and those who are being consecrated all have one origin (22).* Christ is the guide who leads the family of sisters and brothers to salvation. The human

family, the family that multiplied as a result of conjugal love and the family that populated the world has been redeemed by Jesus and has achieved the meaning of true marriage.

My sisters and brothers, I want to leave the following as the message of my homily today. Why is marriage also a sacrament? Why is it not enough that a man and woman should marry and live together happily? Why are there so many people who even though they have not received the blessing of the Church but live together are happy and good and have proven their love? We do not say it is wrong to live this way but we do say that this is incomplete because such people lack the sacramental meaning of marriage in their life. In other words, the love between a man and woman, no matter how noble and faithful they may be, but without the sacrament of marriage these people do not fulfill the sign which God meant to be symbolized in the love between man and woman.

Why in the beginning did God create man and woman? Why did God use this attraction between man and woman? Why did God want this love between man and woman to be permanent and to be fruitful in bearing children and creating a home? It was not simply to take delight in the presence of man and woman or take delight in seeing them grow and multiply. It was for something more divine! It is because the love between man and woman and their children reflect the infinite love of God for humankind and is the reason why people follow Jesus, the redeemer.

Every marriage reflects the love of Christ for his Church and the love of the Redeemer for the redeemed people. When there is no sacramental blessing, then conjugal love has not been raised up to become a sign of divine love.

Several times I have used the comparison of the host on the altar. Here on the altar we have the hosts made of wheat, but not the Body of Christ until the priest consecrates them and makes Christ present in the sign of the bread. The love between man and woman is similar to this. Simply bread, the bread of love, there is nothing wrong with this but it is incomplete. Only when a man hands himself over to a woman and a woman hands herself over to a man, and both do this before God and for the length of their days and when God blesses this love with children --- only then is this love consecrated. God has joined them together forever and the love of man and woman has been transformed into the love of God for humanity.

Therefore a marriage that has been blessed by God has a mission to fulfill. Everyone who sees a married man and woman walking together in the street can say: *there is still love if God loves us like they love one another*. Therefore when there is infidelity in marriage, the mission of marriage is not fulfilled. Marriage has a sublime mission that is not limited to the home and one's children but rather has ecclesial ramifications and these must be fulfilled if marriage is to benefit society.

As we continue this reflection I want to place before you the following beautiful consideration of Puebla: *The couple sanctified by the sacrament of matrimony is a witness to the paschal presence of the Lord* (23). What is the meaning of these words? Every marriage that is blessed by God is a paschal presence, that is, a presence of the redeeming Christ, a presence of the risen Christ. Christ, who lives in love, lives in husbands and wives.

The Christian family cultivates the spirit of love and service. Four fundamental relationships of the person find their full development in family life: parenthood, filiation, brotherhood, and nuptial life (24). In other words, parenthood is the relation between parents and their children. With what tenderness does a father behold his son who prolongs his life! Filiation: the tenderness with which children view their parents, the origin of their lives! Brotherhood: children love one another as sisters and brothers and recognize their parents as the source of their life. Finally, as children reach

adulthood, a young man will leave the home of his mother and father and join together with a young woman who also leaves her home in order to establish a new home.

Puebla states: *These four relationships of parenthood, filiation, brotherhood, and nuptial life make up the life of the Church* (25). We will have a holy Church with a true filial sense of God when children are born who see in their father the image of God and see in their mother the tender image of infinite love. People will work together as sisters and brothers when they have learned in their homes how to love one another as sisters and brothers. When young women and men are called to form a new home they are called not only to create their own family but also to form a family with other families and to create with a sense of true love the family of families: the nation. When young people form a family in this manner they will be able to tell us that Christ loved his Church in the same way. Thus Puebla says: *Family life reproduces these four basic experiences and shares them in miniature. They are four aspects of human love* (26). Human love has four faces and these are lived out as family. Thus the holiness of marriage that Christ came to redeem is presented in today's gospel passage as a problem of conscience that is enlightened by Jesus.

We have tried to unite the person of the Pope to the person of Jesus redeeming matrimony. We have compared human honesty to the person of the Pope. We have also seen how Puebla denounces the media and the environment in which we live because they appear to contradict the original plan of the Creator. In fact everything seems to conspire on behalf of the hardness of heart that Jesus spoke about and because of which Moses permitted the writing of a bill of divorce. Indeed, it was for this reason that divorce became a reality. But in the beginning this was not so and now marriage has been redeemed as a sacrament, a most high vocation that today more than ever before must be lived in the fullness of a demand that our people claim as their own. My beloved sisters and brothers, now is not the time for immorality but for austerity and if marriage is above all an image of the infinite love of God, then this demands an austerity of life that is needed at this time of change. Therefore, let us, you and I, who are members of a family, look beyond the limited confines of this small corner of the earth and let us look at our Church and try to be Church from the perspective of our own homes.

Life of the Church

Thus it is here, from the perspective of a family, that I direct our sight toward the Church, toward the realities of our Church so that we might love the Church as family and experience the Church as one single home.

Unfortunately because of health reasons I was unable to fulfill several commitments and as a result I owe a visit to the Carmelite Institute.

I congratulate the Vicariate of Mejicanos for the Christology course that was given by Father Arias. Yesterday certificates were given to about sixty participants.

In El Hogar del Niño we celebrated the sacrament of Confirmation.

The parishioners of the church of Concepción and the parish of San Francisco Morazán celebrated their patronal feast of Saint Francis Assisi. I greet the Franciscan Community at this time of the feast of their great founder.

In El Colegio Santa Inés in Santa Tecla, the Church was enriched with the Confirmation of young people who were prepared by the Salesians.

The Sisters of the Sacred Heart have begun ministry in Jayaque. In Zaragoza the Sisters have prepared a wonderful group of young people who will be confirmed today.

The young men at the seminary are preparing a youth gathering that will take place in the parish of San José de la Montaña.

Let us remember that today, October 7th, is the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary. In the parish of El Rosario the Dominican Community preserves this profoundly popular devotion and invites us to participate in the popular devotion of *las tres gracias* (the three graces) at noon. Let us participate in this devotion not because of some superstition but with a true desire to pray before the Virgin. October has always been a month of much prayer and both our nation and our Church need much prayer. Also in the parish of El Rosario we will celebrate the sacrament of Confirmation at 6:00pm.

The clergy continue to make their retreat and this week the clergy from the Vicariate of Cuscutlán will be on retreat.

I congratulate the schools that are celebrating the graduation of their students and their closing for vacation.

On October 2nd, Opus Dei celebrated the fifty-first anniversary of their foundation. This is a family that is growing among us as they attempt to sanctify professionals and life in the world. Hopefully this wonderful witness results in the needed changes of our society --- changes which must be brought about in light of the gospel.

We have received support for our means of communication. Last Sunday I spoke about the threats against Radio YSAX and people withdrawing their advertisements. So I want to thank all those people who do support us with their advertising and assure you that we understand your fears. Therefore I again call upon all Catholics, if it is possible, to support our radio station in its cultural aspects. We have seen responses that have filled us with much enthusiasm such as the marriage that took place in El Progreso, Santa Tecla. From the same village Gabriela Quintanilla and Bonifacio Recinos have sent help that enables us to sustain our radio station and newspaper. We received beautiful letters from Ego Serrano Montes, Don Diego de Paz and Don Pablo Miranda --- all of whom made contributions and are in accord with supporting a cultural radio station. I know that several people will make this work possible.

I take this opportunity to express my solidarity with Father Fabián Amaya who is being harassed in Chalatenango. Once again he was asked to appear at the military headquarters or, I should say, he was brought there as a prisoner for no apparent reason.

I promised you that I would obtain more information concerning the news that was reported in the press with great scandal, news concerning the Pope reprimanding the Jesuits.¹⁴ I have received a copy of the discourse that the Pope issued to the Society of Jesus. Among other things he says: *From the information that reaches me from all over the world, I know the great good done by so many Jesuit religious by their exemplary life, their apostolic zeal and their sincere and unconditional faithfulness to the Roman Pontif*¹⁵. Naturally the Pope says: *the crisis which has recently afflicted, and is still afflicting religious life, has not spared your Society, causing confusion*

*in the Christian people and concern to the Church, but he warmly calls their attention to the fact to honor the great hopes that the Pope has placed in them. And he recalls the *recomenations of my immediate predecessors Paul VI and John Paul I and the great love they had for the Society that was close to their hearts and which I also make fully mine.*¹⁶* He stated: *I know what a living force the Society represents, and therefore it is my deep desire that it should grow and prosper according to its true spirit, setting everyone an example of deep religious spirit, doctrinal soundness and faithful priestly activity, so that it may carry out fully the mission that the Church expects of it and render to the Apostolic See that service which, according to its Institute, it is pledged to undertake*¹⁷. So the Pope's message to the Society of Jesus is highly positive.**

On behalf of the Church I want to echo the denunciation of the community El Pepeto and Soyapango who claim that an individual (they believe this person is a military official disguised as a priest) has visited children, claiming to prepare them for First Communion. What this individual is really attempting to do is obtain information about the catechists. He presents the children with literature about Fidel Castro and other pamphlets against the pastoral ministry of the Church and then asks the children if this is the catechism they are learning. The people have protested this deception and warn people in the village of Pepeto to be careful. I repeat this warning to the whole Archdiocese so that no one is deceived in this way.

Events of the week

From the perspective of the Church as family let us look at our civil order. I am pleased that you and I are able to reflect on our life during our Sunday Eucharist. This enables us to insert the Catholic Church into the present problems of our country. If people do not live the gospel then we can say that their faith, seen as a commitment that enlightens and animates their present life, is not being lived out in the way that Jesus desires, namely, that people fully commit themselves to their sisters and brothers. Therefore, here I point out and speak with the same authorization as the Pope when he spoke to the United Nations: *This confidence and conviction on the part of the Apostolic See is the result, as I have said, not of merely political reasons but of the religious and moral character of the mission of the Roman Catholic Church.*

We experienced a curious event this week: the coffee growers rejected the new taxes.¹⁸ It was interesting that in defense of their interests they brought into the public spotlight the expenses and waste of the government of El Salvador. For example, they state: *Do you not believe it is a waste to spend millions on the sport stadiums and arenas that exist in San Salvador when they are occupied by a small number of people and while so many town and villages of the country lack a place where people can play sports? Is it not a waste to expand El Hotel Presidente which is practically unoccupied? Is it not a waste of money when we see so many official vehicles, luxury vehicles, traveling to vacation spots during the time of national holidays --- add to this the cost of fuel and the salary of chauffeurs? Is it not a waste of money when such a large number of people are employed as bodyguards for government officials while at the same time so many towns and villages lack school desks and teachers?** *Was not money badly invested in the refinery of Jiboa and the new airport that cost hundred of millions of colones --- and these works are not generating revenue? Is it not a waste of money the millions that are being spent on the study of traffic and farming projects and other projects undertaken by economic planners as well as on-going studies and projects undertaken by INSAFI and FIGAPE --- monies often counted as lost funds?*¹⁹

The coffee growers made these denunciations with true patriotic love and they merit your applause because so many expenses are a waste of money. But the coffee growers speak about

these realities not because they are concerned about all these things but because they do not want to pay their taxes.*

I believe the commentary on radio YSAX was most precise when they stated: *As long as the National Dialogue consisted of meeting in the Presidential House where there was an exchange of abstract discourses against violence and corruption in the teaching being imparted in our schools and pulpits, as long as the owners of the means of production were asked to give nothing but abstract statements of optimism and solidarity, then the National Dialogue was able to continue with no obstacles. Now that the government tries to reform certain taxes in order to do something constructive in the country and avoid a total and definitive lack of prestige, now that people are asked to concede something, to sacrifice, to collaborate in the practical order to better the lot of the majority and the whole country ... now the dialogue has ended.*²⁰

In light of these events we see that it is good that the coffee growers speak and unite together to defend their interests, but I ask: why are the coffee growers allowed these campaigns, publications in the press and meetings, yet when our poor *campesinos* seek to better their precarious situation they are denied the right to organize and not given access to the media and no one listens to their demands?*

The government is in the middle of two fires. On the one side are people who are becoming poorer and unable to support the consequences of the unequal distribution of wealth and the brutal repression ... people who demand justice. On the other side, a few economically powerful people who see their personal interests in danger and so they attack and threaten and demand the withdrawal of any measure to correct the injustice. It is necessary for the government to define itself and define itself in favor of the greater majority of people.*

In light of this conflict I would like you to listen closely to the words of the Pope in the United States: *God destined the earth and all that it contains for the use of all women and men and all nations. (27) In this way, guided by justice and love, all created things can be shared justly by humanity.*²¹

Another event that occurred this week and that we as Christians must look at critically is the assassination of four leaders of the Federation of Farm Workers: Apolinario Serrano, José López, Patricia Puerta de García, and Félix García Grande. These were four beloved leaders among our *campesinos*, and as you have been informed, their lives were taken from them. Our Legal Aid Office has published an informational bulletin that relates how these individuals were found and killed, and analyzes the contradictory versions published in the national press. For example, on October 1st it is said that according to the present investigation the occupants of the first car opened fire on those who were guarding the military post and only then did the soldiers respond and as a result three men and one woman was killed. Another report stated: *A group of soldiers were about to leave for routine operations when one of the soldiers began to stop the movement of cars and this created the incident because the lead car gave the impression that they were not going to stop, etc...*²².

Legal Aid has placed in doubt the official version because he said that: *when the car was inspected by the Second Justice of the Peace in Opico he did not find any bloodstains on the inside of the vehicle leading him to conclude that the occupants did not open fire from inside their vehicle.*²³ Secondly, the official statement did not contain the name of the soldier who, according to

the official version, was wounded. And thirdly,) various people who live in Opico have stated that they never saw the bodies and that it was possible that the bodies were carried immediately from the military post to the cemetery.^{24}*

At the insistence of the families, Legal Aid was able to exhume the remains and the parents of one of the victims was able to identify the four persons who had been machine gunned. It was stated in the official statement that the victims carried two guns and had planned to attack the Calvary Regiment. This regiment is composed of three hundred well armed soldiers. Their families stated that they always carried their legal documents and according to law their documents and the arms that supposedly were going to be used in this attack should have been turned over to the judge. Yet the two pistols that were going to be used to attack three soldiers armed with G-3 rifles have not been given to the judge.^{25*}

This event has effected me personally because I knew very well one of these *campesinos*. He was truly a very loved man, filled with hope concerning the just demands of the *campesinos*. I believe that in this case a very serious mistake has been made as well as an injustice that cries out to heaven because the hope and the voice of people who desire to overcome their situation of repression has been taken from them. I want to say here, as the Pope has also stated, that the fact that we are dealing with the destruction of human life means that we are also dealing with a crime. But since we are also dealing with a situation in which some people want to destabilize the organization of the people, this makes the action even more criminal because the people have been deprived of an organized voice that defends their rights and so this crime cries out to heaven. For me, what is even more serious is the fact that the army has been an accomplice to this crime.

Allow me to enlighten this event with some words from my Pastoral Letter. In my letter I speak about national security as an absolute, which idea the Pope has condemned in the United States. As an absolute this theory of national security results in horrible consequences and perverts the common good. Here is what I wrote in my Pastoral Letter and it seems to be very pertinent to this event: *This absolutization becomes a mystique --- as if the national security regime, which attempts to give itself a good public image by a subjective profession of Christian faith, were the only, or the best, defender of the Christian civilization of the West. This perverts the noble function of the armed forces. Instead of serving true national interests, they become the guardians of the interests of the oligarchy,* thus furthering their own ideological and economic corruption. Something similar is happening to the security forces. They, instead of caring for civil order, have turned themselves basically into an organization for repressing political dissidents. And finally, the high command unconstitutionally changes the political procedures that ought to decide the country's course democratically.²⁶*

I do not want to think that in light of such an event that the whole army is equally corrupt because four *campesinos* have been assassinated. I want to believe that there is still hope* and that our four brothers who have been sacrificed so unnecessarily, frustrating the hopes of the people.... hopefully our brothers will cry out against these same armed forces so that the noble military profession can once again be restored to honor.*

In light of these events I am pleased that the Commission on Human Rights has written a letter to the Assembly urging them to fulfill their obligation of defending human rights.²⁷ On my part, you know that we have spoken about this matter of human rights very frequently and that I have urged not only the Assembly but also the Supreme Court of Justice to give life to their sacred obligation. I have held these institutions responsible for much of the evil that exists among us because these democratic powers have been negligent and prostituted themselves.*

We received a telegram from Nicaragua: *We repudiate the vile assassination of four leaders of the Federation of Farm Workers and we express our solidarity with you as you struggle against all forms of oppression. We long for the advent of a climate of justice and freedom worthy of Christian people. Sincerely, the women and men religious of Nicaragua.**

With regard to different labor conflicts I am simply going to speak about the hostages in Pan Lido and we have been asked to enter into these negotiations in order to resolve this situation. We also want to speak about the abduction of Luis Escalante that occurred yesterday and we have hope that this can be resolved favorably and that the life of this new victim of violence is respected.²⁸ There are many other denunciations but the time has passed quickly. I want to conclude by saying with the Pope that violence and all these other paths are not the solution that will establish peace. We must seek our national path together, paths that are worthy of a civilized people.

In today's gospel the Lord has fully supported the search for morality that the Pope proclaimed in the United States and that we have focused on as we spoke about the institution of marriage and the family. My sisters and brothers, as we have reflected on the Word today I would like us to return to our homes or to that place which represents our family, to the place where we live and where we share life together and I would like each one of us to realize that we are constituted as an instrument of the social changes that our nation so urgently needs. May all of us --- mothers and fathers, sons and daughters, boyfriends and girlfriends, grandmothers and grandfathers as well as those who are simply visitors in some home --- be architects of peace! May we be true instruments of those rational paths so that we bring about solutions of justice and peace in our surroundings! As the Pope has said, I firmly believe that in Latin America men and women are capable of finding solutions to their problems by rational means. This implies that we must seek freedom and happiness and peace and must always be mindful of the basis for all of this --- justice. So be it.*

¹ See *El Diario de Hoy*, 5 October 1979.

² Discourse of John Paul II to the General Assembly of the United Nations (2 October 1979), *Osservatore Romano*, 14 October 1979.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Homily of John Paul II in Drogheda, Ireland (29 September 1979), *Osservatore Romano*, 7 October 1979.

⁶ Allocution of John Paul II in the cathedral of St Patrick, New York, (2 October 1979), *Osservatore Romano*, 14 October 1979.

⁷ Discourse of John Paul II to the Organisation of American States (6 October 1979), *Osservatore Romano*, 14 October 1979.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ See Discourse of John Paul II to the General Assembly of the Organisation of United Nations (2 October 1979), *op.cit.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Homily of John Paul II in the "Logan Circle" in Philadelphia (3 October 1979), *Osservatore Romano*, 21 October 1979.

¹³ See *ibid.*

¹⁴ See *La Prensa Gráfica* and *El Diario de Hoy*, 22 September 1979. During this week the Frente de Católicos Auténticos published two paid adverts against the Jesuits. See "Los jesuitas: lobos disfrazados de ovejas" and "Un poco más sobre los lobos disfrazados de ovejas", *La Prensa Gráfica* and *El Diario de Hoy*, 1 & 6 October 1979.

¹⁵ Discourse of John Paul II in the audience with Fr Arrupe and several representatives of the Society of Jesus (21 September 1979), *Osservatore Romano*, 30 September 1979.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ See *El Diario de Hoy*, 1 October 1979.

¹⁹ Frente Patriótico Unido, “Más impuestos ¿ por que ?”, *El Diario de Hoy*, 4 October 1979.

²⁰ *El Salvador: entre el terror y la esperanza*, UCA Editores, San Salvador, 1982, p. 518.

²¹ A text of *Gaudium et Spes* quoted by Pope John Paul II in the homily of the Mass celebrated in Des Moines (4 October 1979), *Osservatore Romano*, 21 October 1979.

²² “Investigación sobre muerte de atacantes a Caballería”, *La Prensa Gráfica*, 1 October 1979.

²³ Boletín del Socorro Jurídico de Arzobispado, “Asesinato de cuatro dirigentes campesinos”, *Orientación*, 7 October 1979.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ This part of the Socorro Jurídico Bulletin was not published in *Orientación*, perhaps for reasons of space. But Mons Romero was holding it in his hands and read to complete text. See *Manuscritos de los esquemas de las homilias de monseñor Oscar A Romero*, Oficina de la causa de canonización de monseñor Oscar A Romero, Arzobispado de San Salvador.

²⁶ *Misión de la Iglesia en medio de la crisis del país*, (6 August 1979), 47.

²⁷ See Comunicado de la Comisión de Derechos Humanos de El Salvador (CDHES) a los señores secretarios de la Asamblea Legislativa (29 September 1979), *La Prensa Gráfica*, 5 October 1979.

²⁸ Señor Luis Escalante Arce, president of the Banco Agrícola Comercial, was kidnapped on 6 October 1979. See *La Prensa Gráfica*, 7 October 1979.

Marginal References (1) Lk 3,9; (2) Mk 10,5-6; (3) Mk 10,2; (4) Dt 24,1-4; (5) Mk 10,5; (6) Gn 2,18; (7) GS 12; (8) Gn 2,21-22; (9) Gn 2,21; (10) GS 47; (11) Mk 10,9; (12) P 587; (13) EN 29; (14) Mk 10,9; (15) Mk 10,5; (16) GS 47; (17) P 571; (18) P 573; (19) P 573; (20) P 577; (21) Mk 10,5-6; (22) Hb 2,11; (23) P 583; (24) P 583; (25) P 583; (26) P 583; (27) GS 69.