

THE CHURCH'S MISSION IN THE NATIONAL CRISIS

Twenty-ninth Sunday of Ordinary Time
October 21, 1979

Isaiah 53:10-11
Hebrews 4:14-16
Mark 10:35-45

My dear sisters and brothers.

At this intense time of our history as a nation¹, the Church celebrates two events which, with the serenity of that which is universal and transcendental, provide us with an opportune message. This Sunday, the next to last Sunday in October, is Mission Sunday and tomorrow, October 22nd, John Paul II will celebrate the one year anniversary of his installation and the beginning of his apostolic ministry. The Pope requested that this anniversary not be celebrated with any pomp and so this event is being celebrated in Rome in a very simple manner. In your name and mine, I sent the following telegram: *To his Holiness John Paul II. Vatican City. Our Archdiocese renews its expression of faithful unity and is delighted to send you best wishes as you celebrate the joyful anniversary of your evangelical and simple Pontificate. We ask for your blessing. The Archbishop.**

As the Pope prepared his message for Mission Sunday, he called to mind the emotional moment last year when he was installed at the beginning of his Pontifical ministry (previously this was referred to as the coronation of the Pope). Last year this event coincided with the celebration of Mission Sunday. The Pope stated: *Addressing all the faithful scattered throughout the world, I recalled how, on that day, the Church prayed, meditated, and acted in order that Christ's words of life might reach all men, to be accepted by them as a message of hope, salvation, and complete liberation.*²

Taking a phrase from his first encyclical (1), the Pope presents his message for this year. The phrase is the following: *The mission is never destruction, but instead is a taking up and fresh building, even if in practice there has not always been full correspondence with this high ideal.*³ Then the Pope presents three ideas to communicate to us the meaning of Mission Sunday: *Adopting the riches of the nations which have been given to Christ as an inheritance, and illuminating with the Master's word that sum of customs, traditions and concepts which make up the spiritual heritage of peoples, the Church will contribute in this way to building a new and universal civilization, which, without distorting the nature and typical aspects of the different ethnico-social contexts, will reach perfection by acquiring the highest evangelical contents.* At this present moment in the history of our Republic, all of this seems to be most opportune for our reflection. We should view this from the perspective of the universal Church and the liberating word of Jesus and the Church that brings a mission to people --- a mission that purifies human values with the Church's doctrinal content and creates something new for all nations. Today's readings coincide with this missionary theme. In the past few days the Pope has given us some ideas about the Church and the Virgin. In one of the paragraphs of his discourse that was addressed to the Marian Congress that was held in the Basilica of Pilar in Zaragoza, Spain, the Pope said: *All members of the Christian community, impelled by the Spirit of God and following their ecclesial vocation, must*

*be in society architects of the union of men with one another, promoters of dialogue, reconciliation, social justice and peace. Through the presence of Christians and their testimony, the Church fulfills her vocation as a most sure seed of unity, hope and salvation for the whole human race.*⁴

I invite you to take up this call so that we can live our Christian faith here in El Salvador and be Christian women and men who are able to communicate a hope for salvation and liberation at this transcendental moment.

Today, the Biblical readings are presented in such a way that I would like to entitle my homily with the words of my fourth Pastoral Letter: the Church's mission amid the national crisis. I will develop the following points: First, the mission of the Church; Second, the national crisis and the sins of the people; Third, Christ, the model and strength of true Christian liberators.

The mission of the Church

First, the mission of the Church. This morning the gospel of Saint Mark presents us with a beautiful description of Jesus. Before the passage that was proclaimed this morning, Jesus goes ahead of his disciples and then proclaims for a third time the coming of his passion: *Behold we are going up to Jerusalem and the Son of man will be handed over ... and put to death, but after three days he will rise* (2).

Let us go forward! (3). Look at the characteristics that Saint Mark uses to describe Jesus. It appears that Jesus is in a hurry, as if he is marking out a path for those who are accompanying him or pointing out to the disciples, who represent his Church, that their path must be the same path as his: joyful acceptance of the vocation of suffering and persecution. Like Jesus, this is also the destiny of the Church. The disciples were afraid.

Here we are presented with a dialogue that shows the stark imperfection of the disciples. You have heard how the sons of Zebedee, John and James, two fiery disciples whom Jesus referred to as Boanerges, the sons of thunder, place before Jesus their proposal: *Teacher, grant that in your glory we may sit one at your right and the other at your left* (4). Jesus replies: *You do not know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup that I drink?* (5). This is an eastern expression that means: *Can you endure the tribulations that I am going to endure?* Then Jesus continues and says: *Can you be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?* The original meaning of baptism is to be immersed. Thus baptism by immersion means that an individual goes down into a pool and then comes up out of the waters. James and John respond: *We can drink the cup and immerse ourselves in the sea of suffering* (6). Jesus tells them: *The cup that I drink, you will drink and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized. But what you request: the glory of political power, vanity that inspires your heart, this does not depend on me.* Our vocation is determined according to the plan of God. Every person has a place and we would be acting in an evil manner to want what we want and not accept what God wants from us.

As Jesus analyzes the disciples request and their response, he speaks some wise words: *You know that those who are recognized as rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them and their great ones make their authority over them felt. But it shall not be so among you. Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all. For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many* (7). This is the mission of the Church. It is a mission that follows Christ disinterestedly and which, like Christ, should say: *I have not come to look for privileges or honours, things which flatter the taste. I have come to serve.* The first reading presents us with a prophecy that seems to

refer to Jesus as the Servant of Yahweh (8), the one who comes to serve and thus the handing over of his life is the greatest sign of service: *In my kingdom you will not be distinguished by the fact that you sit at my right or my left but by the love with which you have served others.* This is the Church's vocation of service. To give one's life for all. Such a painful death in order to pay the debt of sin! As today's first reading states: *Through his suffering, my servant shall justify many and their guilt he will bear* (9).

When Puebla speaks about Latin America and the Church's vocation, we are presented with a text that at this moment in El Salvador is most important (10): *The Church chooses to maintain its freedom with regard to the opposing systems, in order to opt solely for the human being. Whatever the miseries or sufferings that afflict human beings, it is not through violence, power-plays, or political systems but through the truth about human beings that they will find their way to a better future. Grounded on this humanism, Christians will find encouragement to get beyond the hard and fast either-or and to help build a new civilization that is just, fraternal, and open to the transcendent. It will also bear witness that eschatological hopes give vitality and meaning to human hopes.*

For this bold and creative activity.... What beautiful and most opportune qualifiers! Today we do not want Christians who are timid and afraid but Christians who are bold and creative in their action. For this, *Christians will fortify their identity in the original values of Christian anthropology.*(11) In other words, Christians have to learn how to view the human person from the perspective of Christianity. Viewed in this manner no human person will be seen as enemy or as sheep in wolves' clothing. Viewed in this manner there will be no torture or inequality or contempt. Christian anthropology will shine forth because of the absence of unjust systems such as those which we experience.

The Church does not need to have recourse to ideological systems in order to love, defend, and collaborate in the liberation of the human being. At the center of the message of which the Church is the trustee and herald, it finds inspiration for acting in favor of brotherhood, justice, and peace and against all forms of domination, slavery, discrimination, violence, attacks on religious liberty, and aggression against human beings and whatever attacks life (12).

Remember, *the Church does not need to have recourse to ideological systems ... At the center of her message is the inspiration of her Christian anthropology.* We do not long for some imported atheistic Marxist liberation. Nor do we long for the imported system of national security or capitalism. In light of our Christian faith we have to look for, in the depths of El Salvador, the true society that El Salvador needs.*

In the same line of the thought, the Pope states in his message that was written for Mission Sunday: *It is clear, therefore, how the renewal promoted by evangelizing activity, though essentially spiritual, goes straight to the heart of the serious and haunting problem of the economic and social injustices and imbalances which torment such a large part of mankind, and can contribute to its solution. Evangelization and human development, in a word, though remaining clearly distinct, are linked indissolubly*⁵.

You who dream of a spiritualistic religion that is not concerned about politics or the realities of the world --- you have just heard the Pope speak about the missions. Even though Christians are called to be holy and spiritual and seek that which is transcendent, yet this call provides them with light to orient the justice of the human person and to cry out against the sins of humanity.

Christians are able to act in this manner when they embrace the ideology to be creative and bold women and men. Do not be afraid of politics! Do not be afraid of social transformations!*

On this wonderful Mission Sunday it is good to note how El Salvador has received the message of the missionaries and incarnated and lived and made this message come to life. Today, Mission Sunday 1979, we need to embrace their message anew at this moment in our political history so that we do not fall into the traps of one or another side of the conflict but so that we might be authentic Christians.*

The crisis of the nation and the sins of the people

The second point is: the crisis of the nation and the sins of the people. I have already clearly communicated to you the key concept of the Pope's message for Mission Sunday: *the mission is never destruction, but instead is a taking up and fresh building.*⁶ In today's reading I find the roots of the crisis and the sins of the people. In this second point I would like to use the Word of God in order to point out the realities of the crisis that we confront. Hopefully in the present situation of El Salvador everyone will be able to affirm the Church's position.

Today's gospel refers to two ambitious disciples who could be called opportunist(13) so that when there is a change in government they would come forward and say: *help me to obtain a high position.** The gospel also speaks about the sins of rulers. Jesus say: *the rulers of the people tyrannize them and the powerful oppress them* (14). See how Jesus uses harsh words to denounce the sins of his time: the abuses of authority and power and money --- the abuses of anything that could signify power over people. Very often authority and social and economic power are used to oppress and tyrannize rather than serve the common good. This is clearly stated in today's gospel.

The first reading tells us that the death of Jesus is an expression of the sins of people. Jesus on the cross is a wonderful figure of contemplation as we reflect on all the blood that has been shed. Notice how death expresses the crimes and the sins of people. Isaiah says: *he gives his life as an offering for sin* (15).

According to the second reading from the letter to the Hebrews (16), we see that Jesus understands our weakness because he suffered and became incarnate and identified himself with us in everything but sin. Sin degrades the human person and Jesus identified himself with the human person in order to save all women and men. He did not identify himself with sin. Thus sin is the antithesis of Jesus.

Events of the week

The right to insurrection has been invoked. Article #7 of our Constitution states: *The people have the right to rise up in insurrection when the common good is in danger as a result of tyranny.*

In my Pastoral Letter I recalled this principle when I stated: *Pope Paul VI's encyclical Populorum Progressio (17), quoted at the Medellin assembly (18), takes up again the classic teaching of Catholic theology, according to which insurrection is legitimate in the very exceptional circumstances of an evident, prolonged tyranny that seriously works against fundamental human rights and seriously damages the common good of the country, whether it proceeds from one person or from clearly unjust structures. In addition, our own national Constitution recognizes the right of just insurrection.*⁷ I believe that the conditions for insurrection exist here in El Salvador. The Church is not the one who is going to decide the time for insurrection but rather she puts forth her

theological principle. When political interests and those who are able to take control of an insurrection believe that the conditions pointed out by the Church have been fulfilled --- and these conditions have been fulfilled --- then we have a case for legitimate insurrection. Thus we state clearly the position of the Church: we have the right to rise up in insurrection and the insurrection is legitimate.*

In light of this situation the Archdiocese spoke last Tuesday about a pastoral calling.⁸ We stated: *These are not political words but a reflection of faith. Therefore above all we lift up our voices in prayer to God and thank God for his blessings and ask for his inspiration in order to call sinners to repentance and offer to God the many sacrifices of our people that were hopefully sufficient price for the liberation our people have longed for.*

I then addressed the people and asked for *common sense*. This is not cowardice. One radio station said that I was blessing the overthrow of the government. I protest this manipulation of my words.* The words I used were *common sense, expectancy, and understanding*. Specifically I called out to both extremes. I spoke to the extreme right who see their privileges endangered and who are more than capable of making a move in order to maintain the unjust situation. I told them that they must listen to the voice of justice and the demands of the poor.* I also addressed the extreme left and told them that their imprudence and their inability to wait before rushing to judgment and more seriously their violent actions at this time are not legitimate actions of insurrection because there is a path that is open for peaceful negotiation. I stated that when people are obstinate and refuse to accept any path but their own, then this constitutes a serious sin against the common good. This is sinful because people are unwilling to make the effort for political maturity and reflection, unwilling to negotiate with others in regard to the good of the community and thus are only concerned about the interests of their group.*

As I spoke to the people I told them that they should not be mistrustful and that the Church maintained her promise of serving the people. History has taught us that if there is a conflict between the government and the Church, it is not because the Church is in political opposition to the government but rather there is an established conflict between the government and the people and the Church defends the people. I also want to reaffirm the will of the Church. Let no one doubt our desires. There are people who want to turn the Church upside down and make her despicable before the people. Yet it would be slanderous to say that I have blessed any particular movement. The Church does not identify herself with any movement or any political party or any organization. The Church is autonomous and is willing to stand alone in defending the Lord.*

Finally I addressed the government officials and the new government and said that I had read their proclamation⁹ and that it appeared that their plans coincided with the people's aspirations. Naturally all of this can be perfected. We do not want, however, to be paid with promises, rather we want action.* If the actions speak of a government at the service of the aspirations of the people, then you will find us there, at the service of the people and in honest dialogue and collaboration.*

Now I want to speak about what occurred after this but I must emphasize that I remain firm in the position I have stated. Among the members of the new junta there are people who merit our complete trust. But this is not a personal matter and I am not the person who is going to give legitimacy to the new government. The people must judge for themselves*, judge the actions, the spirit and the efficiency of the new government.*

I want to state this so that people do not misinterpret our dialogue. The primary interlocutor of the Church in her dialogue is the people and the primary interlocutor of the government in their dialogue should not be the hierarchy of the Church, but the people. When I speak of protagonist and interlocutor I am referring to the people because the people are the primary protagonists of the structural changes that are urgently needed.* Thus the government has received an urgent invitation not to act behind the backs of the people but rather to do what they have promised to do: to identify themselves with the people and to let their actions speak the truth, to echo the voice of the people and to interpret their needs and give people what they ask for and need.*

Many pleasing promises were made in the proclamation of Tuesday and later in the press conference. For example, four very valid reasons were put forth for the insurrection: First, the previous government had violated the human rights of people; Second, the previous government had fomented and tolerated corruption in public administration and the administration of justice; Third, the previous government created a true economic and social disaster; Fourth, the actions of the previous government led to the discrediting of our country and the noble institution of the military.¹⁰

Other very valid statements have expanded the motives mentioned above. During the press conference we heard the following: *We want to achieve a new and more just and more united society and we reject every action of a decadent society. We seek the participation of the Church that has been castigated because of her defense of human rights. We then heard these wonderful words: We want to make the people of El Salvador into that which the people of El Salvador desire.* Then Mr. Mayorga Quiros stated: *We call upon God to grant us a climate of justice and peace so that we can create a new and better country. May God help us put aside all irrational hatred and avarice!*¹¹ Cornel Majano spoke during the press conference and stated: *We have a new distinct government that will demonstrate its rupture with the past. Human life will be respected because it is most essential for our social life together.*¹² Nevertheless in my call to people I said: *We want to be very clear that this government will only merit the trust and collaboration of the people when they demonstrate that the beautiful promises are not dead letters but true hopes.*¹³

Therefore, there is another point to the Church's position: we are saddened by certain actions of the security forces, actions that occurred this past week and that compromise these beautiful promises. We lament the brutal removal of the workers who were on strike in APEX, ARCO INGENIEROS, LIDO, and DURAMAS. Even though the sixty-eight workers who were arrested have been released, ways should be sought to justly resolve conflicts between labor and management because these situations have not been resolved. The violent action provoked setting fire to three factories that were on strike and this resulted in deaths and injuries.

We lament the sacking of the church and convent in Soyapango and the arrest and abuse of the pastor, Father Modesto Villaran. I express my solidarity with the statements that the Vicar and the parish communities have published¹⁴, statements in which they demand: the immediate release of the sacristan, Tomás Flores, who until now has not been seen even though it is known that he was wounded; economic payment for the damage that was done and the money that was stolen; the return of those things that were removed from the premises; a public explanation by the armed forces of what happened.

We also have a petition from our Legal Aid Office: *With regard to the military operations that took place in Mejicanos, Cuscatancingo and San Marcos we ask the government junta to carry out the thorough investigation that was requested of you by delegates from the Chancery. Reports concerning those arrested, killed and wounded state that more than thirty persons were killed and*

*many more were wounded. We are very interested to know the whereabouts of Tomás Flores, the sacristan of the parish church in Soyapango. Finally, we ask for the formal return of the goods seized by the security forces on October 16th from the parish of Soyapango. A list of the goods that were taken is attached.*¹⁵

In Arcatao there were abuses by the National Guard. Ernesto Menjivar was killed and Elías Pineda was arrested simply because he was heard to lament the death of Mr. Menjivar. Antonio Miranda from Tepeque and Melitón Martínez were arrested and later their bodies were found. On Tuesday another military contingent arrived near the same town and they intimidated people in the surrounding villages. In Las Lomas, the young man, Santiago Ayala, was arrested and it is said that later his body was found. A helicopter and other military equipment have sown terror among the people. At 8:00pm on Wednesday, an arbitrary search of houses was undertaken. The military entered the convent in Arcatao and searched it. We do not know if the goods in the convent were respected.

Don Esteban Blanco Castillo was arbitrarily arrested in Tecoluca.

When these denunciations were presented to the new government, they explained to us that some things had escaped the control of the new government. They also told us that some individuals responsible for these actions had already been punished and that an intense effort was being made to purge the military and create a new mentality. We believe that the purging of the army and especially the security forces is necessary in order for the government to become credible before the people.* We urge that strict criteria be used in appointing people to military positions.* Some appointments have created an unfavorable impression¹⁶ and people have commented: *the same group is returning to power!*

It is sad to have to say this about the military but here we cannot exclude the civil sector. My sisters and brothers, it must be said that the military is not the only institution responsible for the disgraceful situation of our people. Civil leaders are equally responsible for the great losses that we have suffered.* Mindful of the gospel passage in which the opportunists were seeking high places (19), we want to remind the government that in this kind of situation opportunists and ambitious persons will present themselves as willing servants but all of this is a challenge that the people place before the new government.* My criticism is not meant to be destructive. I have already mentioned the hope their promises inspires and the respect they merit as people. But the people are now waiting for action, a time in which the challenge of denunciation can become an alert to select competent officials, military or civil, who can give a new face to the government.* And we need to say both to the military and civilians that for El Salvador this is a new opportunity for conversion, that it is no use creating new structures without new people to fill them. And we must not rely only on structural change: all of us, including Christians and people of the Church, must carry out a profound revision of our life and change in accordance with the demands of justice and love for our country.*

A fifth point is the Church's position in our country's crisis: the challenge is the urgent task to make amends for the abuse of human rights. The letter I mentioned of Socorro Jurídico also requests: *At the Archbishop's request, with all respect we send you the list of political prisoners and disappeared we know to have been arrested by one of the security forces with the firm hope they will be freed as soon as possible, both those in public prisons, in prisons of the security forces or in clandestine prisons of the previous regime or, at least, to provide information where they are since their families are continually asking for them. We are especially asking this now since the*

Government has proclaimed a general amnesty for all deprived of their freedom for political motives.

That there is a move to set up a commission to investigate these claims is a proof of good will so that families and others can be reassured of the situation. But I say to them: *Good will is not enough.* Nor is a commission, outside the government organizations, the most efficient way of finding those still surviving. Presumably they are in secret places which could more easily be found if the security organizations were obliged to provide information on the 176 people disappeared.* The archdiocese can prove these arrests. The investigation should not start by seeing if it is true there are disappeared; it is obvious that there are disappeared.* The people need to know where they are, what has been done with them.*

It is also imperative to punish the intellectual and physical, the primary and secondary authors of the tortures and the disappearances.* The penalty should be reduced for those who collaborate in clarifying the whereabouts of those who have disappeared. This should be done as an encouragement to undo the great evil that has been done.* Here there is no need to mention specific individuals. The people already know the names of those persons who should be brought before the courts. They know the names of those who should be called to testify. I believe that here it is not a question of breaking with the past because if the past was unjust and if people are still suffering painful consequences as a result of the past then the laws that existed in the past and the abuse of those laws have to be examined. If we forget these sufferings of the day of yesterday, this would be a new injustice and would in no way be a breaking with the past.*

Some mothers have written me the following words that seem to be the voices of suffering and injustice. *In light of the offer of general amnesty of political prisoners proclaimed by the present governmental junta, we, the Committee of Mothers of prisoners and those who have disappeared in El Salvador, consider that even though this offer has not been perfected yet we await the time when positive actions will make concrete the answers given by the junta to the Committee of Mothers in their recent visit to the Casa Presidential. Thus we are grieved by the delay and with the complex procedures that must be followed in order to obtain the freedom of our children. Our cries as mothers are the echo of the faithful testimony of the people of El Salvador who recognize that the rights of their best sons and daughters have been trampled upon and that this situation should not continue, should not continue one day longer. We recognize that this evil has been inherited from previous regimes and so the present Revolutionary Junta has the responsibility to make decisive decisions in regard to freeing political prisoners. Such decisions will show that you have broken all bonds with previous governments. Therefore, in light of the offer of general amnesty granted to political prisoners and proclaimed by the Revolutionary Junta, we, the mothers who form this committee, reiterate our plea to you and ask you to tell us the time, the day and the place where we ought to go in order to receive our beloved children.**

The new government ought to be grateful for these suggestions and this encouragement. Here I want to refer to another letter that I have received that expresses anguish during this present time of hope. It reads: *These are times when the blood of our martyrs can begin to produce fruit so that the light shines forth as the clouds of darkness fade away. These are times when past errors ought to be admitted and now corrected. There is also an obligation to make reparation for the past and there is no sign of this happening. Our people, who are so noble and who have suffered so greatly, as well as our worthy leaders and guides, desire justice. The media, especially the radio and press, owe the people an explanation and a clarification of their complicity in the assassinations* and the corruption that characterized the previous government. It is difficult to forget the cunning attacks, the ignominious slanders, the vile accusations and the cowardly offenses that the media leveled*

against institutions, honorable people and faithful collaborators of the Church, and specifically, against the dignity of the Archbishop. The corruption of the previous government allowed a powerful and wealthy minority to line their pockets with the people's money and allowed the same people to hide behind phantom groups and organizations and individuals. The noble mission of the media demands that they make known the names of those persons responsible for these crimes. All people, especially Catholics, await these clarifications that will ultimately define the attitude of the media. The silence that up until now has been observed in this regard demonstrates their ideological complicity with the previous regime and with those sectors of society who are still against the people and against the formation of a new country where people can live in love and justice and peace.**

There is another very encouraging letter that I want you to be aware of because in good will this letter was sent to the new government. The letter states: *The present government ought to return the 50 million colones that was taken from different government agencies and wastefully invested in arms*. We also ask for justice in the matter of the assassination of seven priests, including Father Rodríguez¹⁷ ... Up to the present only the UDN has requested this¹⁸ and we have not heard any other commentary in this regard.** The words of Cornel Majano are very descriptive in this regard: *We do not want vengeance but yes, we want justice.**

I want to refer to another delicate letter that was sent to the United States: *According to the news presented in La Prensa Gráfica and dated October 17th it is stated: "The United States characterizes the overthrow of the government as encouraging." In the same article it is stated: "the United States considers renewing military assistance if the new junta betters the human rights situation."* The letter goes on to ask: *Have you forgotten what the Pope in his recent visit asked for on behalf of those nations that are poor? We have had enough guns and bullets* ... We hunger for justice, medicine, education, and effective programs of equitable development. If human rights are respected the last thing we need is arms and instruments of death.**

I repeat that my intention here is to encourage and support the aspirations of the new government and the desires of the people as they search for the path of justice. The people will ultimately judge the government and therefore it would be good for the government to guarantee their security by walking on the path of justice.

At the same time we are not in accord with the irresponsible and precipitous manner in which the ERP and LP-28 have acted, calling the insurrection of Tuesday and Wednesday popular and distributing arms to the people who responded to their call. This action provoked the death of at least thirty-one persons and eighty others were wounded.* We have learned that these organizations have put aside this precipitous attitude and are willing to act in a more mature political manner, one of cooperation. Thus, the security forces have to learn how to confront these situations with less violence. I repeat that insurrection is licit only when all other rational means have been exhausted. At the Organization of American States the Pope spoke some very enlightening words: *In Latin America there is no situation that cannot be resolved through peaceful negotiations* (John Paul II, Address at the Organization of American States, #2). Today in El Salvador we seem to be able to achieve what the Pope has suggested. All of us have the obligation to offer our generous collaboration. As long as all peaceful means have not been exhausted and until we see if the just demands that have been placed before the new government are achieved, there is no right to seek another insurrection until the present insurrection has been declared ineffective.

As I said in my previous call, I ask all of you, not only the political groups, but all professionals, all women and men, to realize that everyone has different abilities and through the efforts of everyone we can build a common foundation of justice upon which we can then construct a true monument to national peace.¹⁹

This is my final point. Change and the solution of our many problems are urgent but before making a definitive judgment on the government's lines of actions, we ought to give a prudent time to the junta to organize the government and begin to act.*

We lament the assassination of Cornel Martell at the hands of the FPL.

As a service to the people I want to thank the reporter who explained some of the confusion that has resulted from this present situation:²⁰ *What consequences result from the suppression of guarantees? As a result of the suppression of guarantees military tribunals will deal with cases of betrayal, espionage, rebellion and sedition and other crimes against the peace and independence of the state. Another practical question: Can people enter and leave the country during a State of Siege? In general terms, yes, people are able to come and go. But the authorities have the legal power to impede this right, in other words, to prevent the entrance or departure of persons in special cases and to restrict the movement of people during times of curfew. Another question: are social and cultural meetings and sporting events prohibited. No, but written permission should be obtained at least forty-eight hours before such an event takes place. Finally, another very helpful question has been raised by many communities that are confused and afraid to meet: is permission needed to attend sporting events and religious services? No, players and spectators can attend these events with no prior permission since sporting activities are authorized by the corresponding sporting authorities. The same applies to religious activities. In other words, there are no restrictions for people participating in Mass, prayers, worship and religious community meetings -- this applies to all religions. Be very clear about all of this because many persons have been exaggerating things and there is no reason to do so.*

Life of the Church

Continuing with information of an ecclesial nature, we rejoice that the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Mother Theresa of Calcutta. I sent the following telegram to her in which, in addition to congratulating her, I also expressed my gratitude to all those persons who requested that this honor be bestowed on me. *Mother Theresa of Calcutta, India. I am happy that the Nobel Prize has been awarded to you for your preferential option for the poor and that this option is seen as an effective path to achieve peace. Those who graciously desired this honor for me are equally satisfied for having encouraged this cause. God bless you. The Archbishop of San Salvador.**

I am pleased that the human rights award from the Bruno Kreisky Foundation in Vienna was given to the cardinal of Chile, Raúl Silva Henríquez and the archbishop of Managua, Miguel Obando Bravo.*

Our Church continues to receive expressions of solidarity like the one that arrived from Holland: *During a meeting in Holland, we, one hundred representatives of local Christian communities gathered together by the Council of Churches under the theme: "Power of the state, counter force of the organized Church" have decided to inform you of our union with you, your Church and your people. We hope that your call for transcendental social change will lead to the establishment of Christian communities.**

At this time I want to make known to you the call from the Carmelite Sisters at El Hospital de la Divina Providencia regarding their charitable work of building a place for the orphans of the sick people who died at the hospital. They still need 290,000.00 colones. I had promised the Sisters this money if I received the Nobel Prize. A pity the prize went to India, otherwise they would have already had the money.* But in India, like El Salvador, the way of the poor is the way of peace. I ask you to help the Sisters in this work that without a doubt will bring many blessings of peace to our people. I also want to express my gratitude to you for the generous manner in which you have responded to the call to help Radio YSAX and the Cathedral where the work continues with the great encouragement that the people have given us.

I want to conclude by sharing with you some of the events that revolve around the ecclesial life of the Archdiocese.

In the vicariate of La Resurrección we celebrated the sacrament of Confirmation for some young people in the church of María Auxiliadora.

In the parish of San Juan Cojutepeque we have seen something very beautiful: a Biblical contest among the students in the parochial school. I want to send my cordial greetings to Father Mundo Brizuela and his wonderful collaborator, Don Luis Tarcisio Molina, as well as the professors of this exemplary school.

In the church of San Ignacio I was very pleased to preside over the graduation of the students from the school there. For this reason I again extend my congratulations to all the schools that have seen their efforts crowned with recent graduations.

Yesterday in the parish of San Rafael Cedros we celebrated a gathering of the pastoral ministers and also inaugurated an exposition of the sewing and culinary academy.

In the school in Lourdes, the Assumption sisters celebrated a beautiful first communion.

Yesterday the Carmelites celebrated the feast of their patroness, Saint Theresa of the Child Jesus which was celebrated liturgically on October 15th. It has been said that she is the protectress of the overthrow of the government.

The men and women of the Passionist Congregation celebrated the feast of their founder, Saint Paul of the Cross, the great saint who has given us a wonderful theology of suffering. This theology is necessary to understand so that we do not protest our suffering but rather are able to give a redemptive meaning to the cross and suffering.

I want to highlight the death of two great friends who died during this past week: Don Marcelo Weill and Don Joaquín Cuéllar. May the Lord grant them eternal rest.

Lastly, our Legal Aid Office wants to extend an invitation to the national and international press to attend a news conference tomorrow, Monday, October 22nd at 5:00pm in El Externado San José. The majority of the families of the one hundred seventy-six persons who have disappeared will be present there. At this press conference the national and international press will be informed about the capture and disappearance of these persons.

Jesus, the model and strength of true liberators

Today when we say that El Salvador needs men and women who are inspired to seek true liberation we hear the words of the Pope's message. These words were written specifically for this occasion when the universal Church prays, meditates and ministers in such a way that all people might know the message of the Word of God as a message of hope and salvation and complete freedom.²¹

As we search today's readings to support this idea I would say that in Jesus we discover the model liberator, a man who so identified himself with the people that Biblical commentators are not sure if the Servant of Yahweh announced by the prophet Isaiah (20) refers to the people or to Jesus who came to redeem us. How wonderful to have a liberator who is so profoundly identified with the people that his cause is the same cause as the people and the individuals that he liberates.

Jesus is the model liberator because as a result of his incarnation he takes upon himself the faults of the people. Instead of denouncing and holding up the sins of people in front of their faces, he takes upon himself the sins and weaknesses of all women and men and raises them up on the cross in order to pay our debt. In him all sins are forgiven.

Jesus offers himself in order to cleanse and create a people worthy of God. He is our model because he truly desires to glorify himself by freeing his people. At this time I invite the new government, those persons who will be appointed to serve in various positions and all people of good will to look at Jesus and to imitate him as we carry out our different responsibilities. Let us identify ourselves with the cause of the nation and be willing to die so that our people may be happy.

I say that Jesus is the strength of true liberators because he did not come as a demagogue. In today's gospel Jesus tells us: *The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many* (21). Jesus offers up his life so that all people might have eternal life.

Let us conclude with the beautiful perspective of the second reading. The letter to the Hebrews refers to Christ as the Eternal Priest who has passed through the heavens carrying with him the mark of suffering. (22) He understands the misery of people and enables them to draw near to the throne of grace with confidence. He is willing to shower the strength of his salvation upon the Church and we are all Church. We are not alone in our efforts to bring about liberation. The Eternal Priest accompanies us and we are able to go to him in order to empower ourselves and thus be the true liberators that our country needs at this time. So be it.*

¹ On 15 October 1979, some 400 officials of the so-called "juventud military" carried out a coup against the president, General Carlos Humberto Romero. Two days later they set up the Junta Revolucionaria de Gobierno, composed of Colonels Adolfo Arnaldo Majano and Jaime Abdul Gutiérrez, and 3 civilians: Román Mayorga Quirós, Guíldermo Manuel Ungo and Mario Antonio Andino.

² Message of John Paul II for the World Day of Missions (14 June 1979), *Osservatore Romano*, 16 September 1979.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Message of John Paul II on the closure of the International Marian Congress in Zaragoza, 21 October 1979.

⁵ Message of John Paul II for the World Day of Missions (14 June 1979), *op.cit.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Misión de la Iglesia en medio de la crisis del país*, (6 August 1979), 74.

⁸ See “Llamamiento pastoral ante la nueva situación del país” (16 October 1979), *Orientación*, 21 October 1979.

⁹ See Proclama de la Fuerza Armada de El Salvador, *La Prensa Gráfica*, 16 October 1979, and *El Diario de Hoy*, 17 October 1979.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *La Prensa Gráfica*, 19 October, 1979.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ “Llamamiento pastoral ante la nueva situación del país”, (16 October 1979), *op.cit.*

¹⁴ See *Manuscritos de los esquemas de las homilias de Mons. Romero*, Oficina de la causa de canonización de Mons. Romero, Arzobispado de San Salvador.

¹⁵ “Solidaridad”, *Orientación*, 28 October 1979.

¹⁶ Three days after the coup d'état, Colonel José Guillermo García was appointed Minister of Defense, Colonel Carlos Reynaldo López Nuila Director of the National Police, and Colonel Carlos Eugenio Vides Casanova Director of the National Guard. See *La Prensa Gráfica*, 18 & 19 October 1979.

¹⁷ Reference to Fr. Nicolás Rodríguez, assassinated in Chalatenango in December 1970 on his way to help a sick person. At first his death was considered a common crime, “but after it was understood to be a political crime, committed with the aim of intimidating all the clergy”. See Mons. Arturo Rivera Damas, “La labor pastoral de la arquidiócesis de San Salvador, especialmente de las comunidades eclesiales de base en su proyección de justicia. Dentro de este marco, la persecución”, ECA 348-349 (1977), p. 809.

¹⁸ See *La Prensa Gráfica*, 17 October 1979.

¹⁹ See “Llamamiento pastoral ante la nueva situación del país” (16 October 1979), *op. cit.*

²⁰ *La Prensa Gráfica*, 20 October 1979.

²¹ Message of John Paul II for the World Day of Missions (14 June 1979), *op. cit.*

Marginal References (1) RH 12; (2) Mk 10,32-34; (3) Mk 10,32; (4) Mk 3,17; (5) Mk 10,35-38; (6) Mk 10,39-40; (7) Mk 10,41-45; (8) Is 53,11; (9) Is 53,10-11; (10) P 551; (11) P 552; (12) P 552; (13) Mk 10,37; (14) Mk 10,42; (15) Is 53,11; (16) Heb 4,15; (17) PP 31; (18) M 2,19; (19) Mk 10,35-37; (20) Is 53,11; (21) Mk 10,45; (22) Heb 4,14-16.