

GOD BRINGS THE JOY OF SALVATION TO ALL

**Third Sunday of Advent
December 16, 1979**

Zephaniah 3:14-18
Philippians 4:4-7
Luke 3:10-18

My dear brothers and sisters.

In the course of the Liturgical Year this Sunday takes on a name that is a sign of joy and happiness. The Introit begins with words from the reading of Saint Paul: *Rejoice in the Lord always* (1). Thus this Sunday is called *Gaudete* Sunday which means *rejoice*. This Sunday's liturgy is one of joy and hope. In the prayer at the beginning of our celebration we asked God that we might *experience the joy of salvation and celebrate that feast with love and thanksgiving*. At this time when we send and receive Christmas cards, the Church also sends us her greetings. She does this, however, not in some superficial way or in a way that makes her socially acceptable. Rather she gives us a message that leads us to deepen the reason for our joy. Indeed, even those who do not believe in Christ see the approach of Christmas as an event in which something joyful is occurring in the world.

We celebrate with joy because God enters our history. We are filled with joy because as the Lord's confidants we have come to an awareness of his salvific plan for all people. As a result, we become the object and the subject of this plan and are called to collaborate in the plan of salvation.

Last Sunday we anticipated today's theme as we reflected on John the Baptist who was presented as the precursor and a model for all people because he characterizes the type of person that God needs in order to make the Good News of salvation present in the world. The Church and the Christian community continue to be precursors in the world when they proclaim the fact that the Lord comes to save the world. Today, John the Baptist is present as an educator, a moralist, and a preacher ... one who speaks to us about the moral demands required of us as we accept the gift of God's salvation. John proclaims a message of austerity but at the same time this austerity is a condition for profound joy.

The title of today's homily is: *God brings the joy of his liberation to all people!* Let us return to him! I will develop the following points: First, God has entered our history; Second, liberation under the sign of joy; Third, turning toward God, the only path to joyful liberation.

God has entered our history

Above all else, we affirm the idea that we celebrate during Advent and we celebrate because this is a season of preparation for the feast of the Nativity: the presence of God in history.

The name of this season, Advent, signifies the celebration of "the coming": God comes to women and men. This proclamation of the prophets reached its culmination with Isaiah naming the God who comes to save us: Emmanuel, God-with-us. (2)

The gospel presents John in an historical context: *It was the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea* (3). The gospel also refers to the four tetrarchs and the high priest. In this historical-religious framework, the Holy Spirit made the voice of John, the son of Zechariah, who was raised in the desert, heard. From there John moved throughout the whole region of the Jordan proclaiming the coming of God: *The Kingdom of God has arrived. In your midst is someone whom you do not know! He is great!*. This is the good news that the gospel places in the mouth of John the Baptist. He proclaims the great news that God has come and this continues to be great news for all Christians. Christians who do not experience joy as a result of this drawing near of God in history have not understood the essence of their faith.

This is the conviction that the first reading wants to assure us of. One of the prophets proclaims to us the fact that God who comes and exists is not some static, metaphysical, catechetical concept of God. God is a living God, a God who is proclaimed in today's first reading as the King of Israel: *The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst, you have no further misfortune to fear. On that day, it shall be said to Jerusalem: "Fear not, O Zion, be not discouraged! The Lord, your God, is in you midst, a mighty Savior"* (4).

Let us look at the concept of God in the Old Testament. It is good that at the present time we are being freed from a static concept of God. We are presented with the idea of a dynamic God, a God who walks with his people, a God who acts and inspires people in their liberating efforts, a God who is not indifferent in the face of the cries of those who suffer, a God who understood the situation of slavery, humiliation and marginalization of the people in Egypt. God is willing, in his time, to send a guide, a redeemer, into our midst. This is the great news that John the Baptist communicates to us.

The Second Vatican Council speaks to us about the ways in which God is revealed in creation and then tells us that God sent his own Son to give us a more intimate revelation, a supernatural revelation. God also did not come in a static way in Christ, as one who merely observes. Rather he came to enter into our history, to save us in our history, to place the seed of salvation in the history of all people and to plant his hope and faith in the hearts of all races. Christ is the fullness of revelation and is the sign that God is in our midst, loving us, understanding us, entering into every human experience except sin, trying to free us so that we might be what we were meant to be. The Council states: *God is with us to free us from the darkness of sin and death and to raise us up to eternal life* (5).

John preached so often about the presence of Christ that the gospel tells us: *the people were filled with expectation and were asking in their hearts whether John might be the Messiah* (6). John the Baptist knew how to identify himself: *No, I am not the Messiah. I am the voice that announces! I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. I am simply announcing the need for repentance so that you might be prepared to receive the Messiah and therefore I baptize you with water ... awakening a moral disposition in your heart. But someone is coming who will not only baptize you with water but will place within you the seed of eternal life. He will baptize you with fire and the Holy Spirit and that One is now in your midst* (7).

The second reading from which this Sunday draws its name, exhorts us to rejoice because *the Lord is near* (8). See, my dear sisters and brothers, how the presence of God in history is an essential thesis of the Bible, of God's revelation. No Christian should feel alone on their journey! No family has to feel abandoned! No people should feel pessimistic even in the midst of a crisis that seems irresolvable, such as is occurring in our country! God is in our midst! Let us have faith

in this central truth of sacred revelation: God is present and is not asleep! He is active, watching, helping, and in his time will act in an opportune manner. Therefore the presence of God awakens in our hearts true joy: *Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice! Rejoice because the Lord is near* (9). This is the great call that today Saint Paul extends not only to the community of the Philippians, but to Christians everywhere: God is the source of our joy and is near to us.

Liberation under the sign of joy

This Sunday we are given the news that God offers us liberation under the sign of joy. My dear sisters and brothers, how I wish that at this time all those who through this radio transmission are reflecting on the Word of God with me would be left with the optimistic feeling of true joy: *Rejoice in the Lord always* (10). What is the basis for our joy? It is the nearness of God. God is joy and does not want us to be sad. God is optimism and the possibility of all that is good. God is all powerful and does good and loves. Who can be sad when the presence of God fills us?

Saint Paul says: *Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, and recognizing your limitations make your requests known to God, but know that someone can fill you with what you are lacking* (11). During moments of crisis people should know that God has the key to history in his hand and knows how to resolve our situation and thus will restore us to God's joy and peace which surpasses all understanding.

Thus Saint Paul says: *then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus* (12). Our joy is not the joy of the world, the joy of pleasure, the false joy that people call happiness and that is nothing more than bitterness, anxiety and an abomination. Our joy is a joy that produces the peace of God in our hearts. We can have this joy even in the midst of tribulations because it is a joy that arises from redemption. Redemption has been accomplished through the cross and thus the pain of humankind is the cross and, as the cross, it brings redemption and should give us peace, the joy of Easter and the hope of resurrection.

Our joy is not conformity because conformity is the attitude of those who are pessimistic and who believe that everything is imposed from above and therefore one's actions are meaningless. This I would say is a false concept, a blasphemy with regard to the will of God. Such people do not want to escape their situation of oppression and marginalization because they believe that this is the will of God and therefore, to free themselves from such a situation would offend God. But God does not desire social injustice!*

The more needy we are, the more marginalized and oppressed we might be, then the more necessary it is that we do not respond with hatred or resentment but with the holy joy of people who trust in the almighty One, with the holy joy of people who, like Mary, a member of the people oppressed by the Roman Empire, are able to say with optimism and joy: *The hungry he has filled with good things and the rich he has sent away empty. He, if it is necessary, will throw down the rulers from their thrones but will lift up the lowly* (13). This is the holy joy of Mary, the Virgin, the joy of those who are truly content even though they stand beneath the cross. Let us know how to recognize this great power of God who gives us joy.

Our joy ought to stand as a witness before humanity. Saint Paul said: *Your kindness should be known to all* (14). My dear Christians, our Christian attitude before the different situations of our people should not be confused with the attitudes of revolutionaries who do not believe in God. Our attitude should be one of joy and hope so that as we work together with those who lack faith and hope we are able to provide them with a new element. Thus we do not repress our joy but rather

our joy motivates us in our struggle. Indeed, our struggle is ineffective until we come to rely on the transcendence that comes to us from optimism and joy. Then we bring this strength and power to all our earthly struggles.

My sisters and brothers, with today's message I want us to recover our sacred pride in being Christians because in this way we will be able to place all our faith and trust in the Lord. From the perspective of our faith let us know how to incorporate the great liberation of Christ into the struggle of our people. We are not against a prolonged struggle. For twenty centuries we have been engaged in a prolonged struggle against all forms of tyranny and slavery, but we struggle in the name of the One who is not in conformity with any concrete plan of the earth. In this way we are able to continue to enlighten earthly plans so that we can offer better horizons to people who truly desire a better humankind and a better world. This will always be found in a joyful and optimistic faith, a faith that we as Christians profess.

Today's first reading is a typical hymn of true joy, joy of those who believe in God. In the third chapter (and I recommend that you read the whole chapter and not just the passage that was proclaimed) the prophet describes the sadness of people who had fallen into sin and been sent into exile and humbled but did not lose their attitude of optimism. They understand that God is punishing them and so they ask for God's forgiveness and repent. We see that in their conversion there is a promise of salvation. The prophet proclaims the great day of the Lord and says: *On that day you need not be ashamed of all your deeds, your rebellious action against me; for then will I remove from your midst the proud braggarts and you shall no longer exalt yourselves on my holy mountain. But I will leave as a remnant in your midst, a people humble and lowly who shall take refuge in the name of the Lord: the remnant of Israel. They shall do no wrong and speak no lies nor shall there be found in their mouths a deceitful tongue* (15).

For the first time in the Bible the prophet Zephaniah tells us the meaning of the spirit of poverty. The spirit of poverty means that the humble and simple people have placed their trust in God. Thus among these people there is no place for those who are proud and vain or those who cause people to be rejected by God. This is the people who have been chosen through pain and suffering, the people who have repented, the people who stand as a challenge of hope in the midst of the people of Israel.

My dear Christian communities, here we have a sketch of what we have to be ... communities that put all their trust in God. We do not participate in the false pride of those who place their trust solely in the things of this earth. True poverty means that we are concerned in a preferential way for those who are poor, concerned about them as if they were our cause. Thus true poverty means we experience ourselves as poor and thus need from God strength to confront every situation in life.

Thus today's readings clarify this concept of joy and this is a theme that we find expressed in many places in the Bible, for example, in the psalms and the gospels: *Rejoice because your reward will be great in heaven. On this earth you will experience sadness but rejoice because no one can take away your joy.* My sisters and brothers how I would like ... and yes this is my greatest desire as I share these reflections on joy and hope with you this morning ... how I would like to see all forms of pessimism and depression removed from your heart. Thus, the darker the situation, the clearer and stronger our confidence must be in the One who can do all things.

Turning toward God as the only path to joyful liberation

I now want to point out the path on which we are able to acquire the joyful liberation that all Christians should enjoy. First I want to say that those people who are joyful and have freed themselves entirely from all forms of depression ... such people have developed themselves and are more willing than anyone else to work on behalf of the development of others. Those whose hearts are filled with hatred, vengeance and violence are not authentic instruments of the liberation that God desires. It is you, my dear Christians, you who have been purified from your sins, you who are optimistic in your waiting, confident in your poverty, supported by the cross ... it is you who offer true salvation to the country and the world. You rejoice and you are free! Indeed no one is more free than those who are no longer chained to passion and sin. The grave and serious injustice, the unjust structures among our people ... all of these chains around our political and economic situation signal that now is the time for the Lord to come here, now in the midst of our efforts for liberation, now is the time for the Lord to come here.

The way is none other than conversion. Remember last Sunday I spoke about the historical framework in which the Spirit of the Lord inspired John the Baptist to leave the desert and preach. John said he was the voice of one crying out in the desert: *Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths. Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be made low. The winding roads shall be made straight and the rough ways made smooth* (16). These are eastern images that express moral situations. The gospel then continues: *John spoke to the crowds who came out to be baptized by him. "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce good fruits as evidence of your repentance and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our Father,' for I tell you God can raise up children to Abraham from these stones. Even now the ax lies at the root of the trees. Therefore every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire"* (17).

Then begins the passage that was read this morning: *The crowds asked him: "What then should we do?" He said in reply: "Whoever has two cloaks should share with the person who has none and whoever has food should do likewise"* (18). Some publicans (those who were tax collectors and who committed many injustices) approached John and he said to them: *Stop collecting more than is prescribed*. In other words, reform governmental corruption ... a difficult path. Some soldiers asked him: *... and what is it that we should do?* John replied: *Do not practice extortion, do not falsely accuse anyone, and be satisfied with your wages*.

Thus John pointed out to each group of persons their obligation and the path to conversion. After people had truly repented John brought them to the water of the Jordan River and baptized them. This was a sign of purification and was the expression of an interior attitude. If an individual did not want to put aside his evil ways, he could not be baptized. Thus John the Baptist preached and baptized ... signs of conversion.

Notice what has happened in this reading: everyone was seeking redemption. Redemption is universal and God enters history and offers salvation to all people. How beautiful are the words of the fourth Eucharistic prayer: *Even when we disobeyed you and lost your friendship you did not abandon us to the power of death but helped all people to seek and to find you*. It is not necessary to know Christ. Those who are unable to know Christ but in their pagan religions seek with a sincere heart to live honest lives and to serve God as they understand him ... God saves these individuals. Who knows if within our Church faith and the search for God exists in the same way it exists outside the Church. Thanks to God we have some very holy people in our Church. When I pray during the Eucharist: *Do not look on our sins but on the faith of your Church¹*, I think of so many anonymous, poor and simple persons who are the strength of our Church. This morning we see how John the Baptist, a sign of the Church's preaching, was sought by people from many

different sectors of society. Two groups of people are spoken about here, two groups that presented many difficulties in the history of Israel: the publicans and soldiers.

The publicans were despised and in one sense were seen in the same light as prostitutes ... people who were not worthy to be approached. To these persons who were morally marginalized, John pointed out that there is a path of salvation open to them. One day Jesus said: *Tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the Kingdom of God before you the Pharisees, you who are hypocrites ... for you have made religion one of appearances and therefore because you believe that you are good, you despise others whom you see as evil* (19). Who knows who is good or bad in the eyes of God?

A call to conversion is also extended to soldiers. How many people say today that nothing good can be expected from the soldiers? I believe that the gospel presents us a challenge because we are told that no one is condemned in this life and every person, no matter how evil he/she might have been, no matter how heavy a burden he/she might carry ... God calls all people to conversion and there is hope when a little good will arises from that which is decaying. It is a sign that people are not completely lost when there is a spark of salvation in the midst of a very dark crisis of the people.

My sisters and brothers, this is not meant to be an affirmation of any political option but is simply the call of John, inviting the soldiers to draw near so that he can tell them what they must do if they want to enter the Kingdom of God. John does not sell himself to anyone and neither does the Church. The Church's only commitment is to the Kingdom of God and she imposes the demands of the Kingdom on all those who draw near to her. No one who seeks God with a sincere heart should be rejected.

John called to all and demanded a personal commitment to justice. Conversion is something personal. So, too, sin is personal and people have to be purified when they repent and seek the paths of justice. Messages and promises of good will are not enough. John only baptized people who had broken with the past. The past that was left behind as a result of the conversion demanded by John was a path followed by many in the group of the Lord's apostles. Let us not forget, my dear Christians, that the Church was born of sinners. The Church is holy because it has God's Spirit giving it life. But at the same time the Church is sinful and in need of conversion. We are members of the Church and as human persons we are inclined toward evil and perhaps have a past that shames us. But once we are converted, we try ... we try ... we try to follow the Lord. We do not follow him in some perfect manner but our effort to follow him is what makes us true disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the Church's standard that seeks to free people from irresponsible actions in their environment. Saint Paul wrote to the Romans: *Put aside falsehood and speak the truth ... the thief must no longer steal, but rather labor, doing honest work with his own hands*. We could continue these words of Saint Paul: those who are evil should begin to be good ... then such people will find happiness that can never be found in stealing, extortion or torture. All of these things of the past can never bring happiness nor can they be the solution for the problems of our country. Repent and be converted! Then you will find joy and happiness in collaborating with love on behalf of the common good of all people.

Conversion leads to sharing. *Whoever has two cloaks should share with the one who has none. Whoever has food should do the same, even though you might have very little* (20). This is a society that lives in solidarity and a society that the Church promotes because she is concerned

about giving everyone what they need. She does not blindly accept the differences that are created by money and power. John the Baptist said: *Do not abuse people!* (21). So, too, the Church reiterates the same words: Do not abuse people! There are not two classes of people. There are not some people who were born to have everything, leaving the rest with nothing, leaving a majority with nothing and unable to taste the happiness that God has created for all. The Christian society that God wants is one in which we share the goodness that God has placed at the disposal of everyone.

My sisters and brothers, do you think that a Christian attitude is revealed in a case that came to my attention before Mass? I received the following telegram: *I pray that in your Sunday homily you, as the defender of justice and from the perspective of the Bible, will attack the sin of usury. Four years ago a lawyer froze the accounts of a married couple, public employees, because of a debt of 300.00 colones. This situation has continued despite the fact that 2,574.00 colones has been paid and the lawyer still does not want to listen to our pleas to lift the hold on these accounts. This is infernal and is a sign of the need for great repentance and conversion!*

Conversion will be lasting and profound if we are able to analyze our distorted way of looking at the world and people. I want to insist on this because I think what a mature Salvadoran most needs today is a critical sense. Do not be waiting to see which way the bishop will lean, or for what others will say, or what the organization says. Each one should be a critical man or woman. By its fruits you will know the tree. Look at what it produces and criticize it according to what it does, whether it is the government, the people's political organization, the political party, or whatever group. Do not let yourselves be carried along and manipulated. It is you, the people, who must pass judgment with regard to what the people need.* You each have to see the world with your own eyes. You cannot ignore your surroundings. I think: how many poor housemaids have to think the same as the lady of the house! It does not have to be that way; they should think freely. That is the way the masses are manipulated ... many people are controlled through hunger.

You have to be critical and look at the world and individuals. As Christians you must use your own judgment and must learn to sharpen your distinctive Christian judgment. The rich must be critical amid their own surrounding of affluence: why are they wealthy and why next door are there so many poor? A wealthy Christian, through a process of personal questioning of oneself, will find there the beginning of conversion: why am I rich and all around me so many that hunger?* The unfaithful spouse will be converted and become a model spouse when he accepts the consequences of his machismo and asks himself why is he unable to have a mature, adult and Christian relationship with his wife?*

What I am saying in all of this is that we should not live our lives according to what other people think or according to what society finds acceptable. John the Baptist called everyone to conversion: Where do you come from? a soldier? ... if you want to enter the Kingdom of God think of this and return to the Lord ... What group do you belong to? ... a publican? a prostitute? ... It does not matter. Begin to see the world with the eyes of a child of God and do not continue to do what you are doing. My sisters and brothers, how many are being lost to sin and acting according to the norms of a society which deprives them of acting according to their own criteria. How many people hold others suspect, including the bishop, because they want everyone to think like they do? No! here I offer you reflections on the Word of God so that each one of you might assimilate these thoughts and then, in accord with your own personal convictions, act as a Christian. Yes, act as a Christian if you want to honor the faith that you profess and not be a victim of manipulation or society.

Another characteristic of the conversion preached by John is that conversion is not only personal but also seeks the renewal of society. The conversion of a politician, a soldier or a drunkard is not enough. One must also discover the network of accomplices that allows prostitution to exist on a large scale. This is especially true if such actions have become part of a system! When one speaks about the owners of certain motels and houses of prostitution, people are horrified.* At times the very people who condemn the immorality of others have become part of the system ... they corrupt people through drunkenness and prostitution.* The conversion that John demands, translated into modern language, is one in which every person discovers the economic circuit that gives birth to alcoholism. How embarrassing that the State itself becomes involved in the sale of alcohol ... yes, the State sells alcohol in order to be able to sustain itself.* At this time of renewal those in charge of the nation's economy should heal the sources of our economy and not allow situations to continue in which the poor support the economy by buying alcohol while other objects are not taxed, objects that could be substituted for these sinful resources that are now a source of the nation's revenue.*

Today true Christian conversion has to discover the social mechanisms that cause the workers and *campesinos* to be marginalized. Why do the *campesinos* only have an income during the time when coffee, sugarcane and coffee are being harvested? Why does our society need to have *campesinos* unemployed, workers underpaid and people who do not receive a just salary? These mechanisms ought to be analyzed not only by sociologists and economists but also by Christians so that they do not become accomplices in a system that continues to create more people who are poor and marginalized and destitute.*

Only through this path of conversion can we find true peace in justice. Therefore, the person of John the Baptist who is presented to us during this Advent season is a figure of the Church and the Christian community which does not simply seek solutions to the problems of vengeance and violence but rather looks for the roots of the evil that exists in our society ... and the root of all these actions is sin. Thus the Church seeks for conversion that also results in the conversion of all people, the conversion of society and not simply the conversion of one single individual. When John the Baptist preached, he was asked: *Are you the Messiah?* He responded: *No, I am simply the precursor. I baptize with water* (22). This was a rite that gave expression to the interior movement of people. Once water drains away the surface once covered with water becomes dry. So, too, with people, if they do not persevere in changing their moral attitudes, if change is simply one of convenience or opportunity, then as situations continue to change there is the danger that people will return to their former ways. The same could be said about the changes in the present political situation. We see this also occur in the media which often allows itself to be manipulated and thus they support the sin of social injustice which can never be defended.*

Therefore the Church supports all that which encourages structural change. But that is not enough. The Church, through the voice of Pope Paul VI, has also said: *Changing structures without changing the hearts of people is simply placing new structures at the service of new sins.* Thus Medellín states: *We will not have a new continent without new and reformed structures, but, above all, there will be no new continent without new women and men who know how to be truly free and responsible according to the light of the gospel* (23). My dear sisters and brothers, this is what I attempt to do as pastor! I am not defending here one or another position in regard to achieving the common good. What I am attempting to do is illuminate the situation with the word of the Lord's justice and demand all systems, political parties, organizations to love and seek that which is good for our country: Repent and be converted. From the perspective of evangelical conversion may we know how to give people the medicine that they need.*

Life of the Church

In this environment, the message of today's gospel (about which I have developed three points and I hope you have understood what I have said) allows us to reflect on the life of our Church to see if we are rejoicing and walking on the paths announced by the precursor as he proclaimed the Kingdom of God. We are also able to see if we have strayed from our life as a Christian community, if our Christian attitudes and way of thinking have been influenced by the ideas of the world and thus hinder our ability to enlighten the world. This is the time of conversion! This is the time to be, like John the Baptist, a clear voice that proclaims the One who will come to save the world. In this situation then I offer you news about our Church and you can judge for yourselves the paths on which we journey.

From Belgium I received a telegram from Bishop Rivera and Msgr. Urioste who, as you know, traveled to Holland to represent the Archdiocese in promoting a collection that is taken up among the people to assist nations of the Third World. It has been an honor for our Archdiocese to be able to promote this collection*. Briefly the telegram states: *Our journey has resulted in very positive expressions of solidarity. Today we had a luncheon meeting with all the members of the Episcopal Conference of Holland.* Our representatives had the honor of sharing this journey of solidarity with all the bishops of Holland.

I want to thank the newspaper, *El Independiente*, which dedicated its December 8th edition to the six priests who were assassinated. The headline was very suggestive: *They preached the truth and therefore they were killed**. One page was filled with photographs of the priests and the editorial was dedicated to them. I want to thank the newspaper for this gesture of solidarity which greatly encourages us. At the same time we are saddened by the fact that Don Jorge Pinto, the director of *El Independiente*, is in ill health in a hospital located here in the city of San Salvador. I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to him for the information that he continually sends to us.

Here I wish to speak about the life of several communities that to my great satisfaction have expressed to me their witness of solidarity and firm adherence to the pastoral guidelines of the Archbishop. These communities lament the fact that *there are communities that have become accomplices of their adversaries and have thus created doubts and allowed their attitudes to be interpreted as a political option.* Their words give me comfort because in my pastoral guidelines I have simply attempted to present pastoral options which enlighten all the different communities. I am very pleased that many communities have expressed their harmony with and understanding of their bishop.

I have been touched by the words of a certain community: *Your service to this community of sisters and brothers is so clear that it is difficult to criticize your pastoral activity in any reasonable way. Yet this is the joyful risk that is accepted by people who attempt to proclaim the Kingdom of God and at the same time attempt to encourage their sisters and brothers to become co-responsible for the Kingdom proposed by the Lord. Your Christian radicalness has clearly demonstrated that the Kingdom of God only moves forward with the radicalness of Christ, etcetera.**

I am also very pleased by the following letter that was sent to me by a member of the Bloque Popular Revolucionario: *I was saddened when I heard the news that the Bloque did not accept your mediation. I was troubled by this news and I offer to work with you until these matters are resolved because with all the strength and courage of my soul I am willing to help you so that we might*

reach the end of this journey. I am willing and aware of the fact that you and I are working on behalf of the integral justice of God. With all my heart I recommend, as you have always told us, that you continue to struggle for the justice that frees all our people from social and spiritual injustice, etcetera..*

This letter is very enlightening for me because, as I said in my Fourth Pastoral Letter, I feel that as Pastor I have an obligation toward the popular political organizations. Even when they mistrust me, I have an obligation to defend their right to organize and an obligation to support their just demands. But I also want to maintain my autonomy so as to be able to criticize the abuses of these organizations as well as denounce all the realities that these organizations might hold up as idols. I want to be able to call them to dialogue with others in a search for the common good. Organized power can be most powerful in society and organized groups can do almost anything when they are also willing to dialogue. But the strength of these groups is diminished when they become fanatical and are only willing to listen to voices that agree with them². The word of the Archbishop is not some systematic opposition to these popular organizations. I am pleased when one of these groups recognizes our points of agreement and also understands where the Church is in disagreement with them.

The women religious working in parish ministry made their retreat this past week. At the conclusion of their time together, they wrote me a very beautiful letter and stated: *It is wonderful to observe that through our ministry with the people we are able to collaborate with you so that the mission of the Church and the Archdiocese might be accomplished. This effort also enriches our spirituality.*

Speaking about the women religious, the Dominican Sisters of the Annunciation who work in El Salvador in the Colegio de Fátima, in the Escuela Masferrer in Santa Tecla, in works of human promotion in Santa Tecla, and in the Escuela San Martín de Porres in Quezaltepeque, Suchitoto, were visited by their Superior General. They celebrated their Provincial Chapter and re-elected Mother Nieves as their Provincial. There is much enthusiasm in this Congregation that has given much to the Church and that promises to give much more. We extend our congratulations to them.

The Sisters from Belgium, who minister in Quezaltepeque and were involved in a serious accident, are still hospitalized. We continue to pray for their speedy recovery so that they can soon return to their ministry in the parish of Quezaltepeque.

The Mercedarian Sisters of the Eucharist, together with Sisters from other Congregations, made their spiritual retreat. During this time of vacation and this time when they are not engaged in educational activities, their retreat is seen as a time of renewal.

Three members of the Oblate Sisters of the Sacred Heart celebrated twenty-five years of religious consecration and one Sister fifty years of faithful service. We have great admiration for these Sisters and we also congratulate them.

Last week in the Diocese of Santiago de María the Cursillo Movement celebrated a Cursillo for women and this week a Cursillo for men. May God continue to bless these encounters of men and women with God.

In the parish Divina Providencia in Colonia Atlacatl we celebrated a very beautiful First Communion ceremony. The Redemptorist Fathers, the Mercedarian Sisters and the catechists deserve our congratulations.

In the village of El Espino de San Pedro in Perulapán we participated in a beautiful celebration of the feast of the Immaculate Conception that was organized by the pastor, Father Solórzano, and his collaborators, many of whom are laywomen and men who minister in the chapel of that village.

La Colonia Delicias del Calvario in Santa Tecla celebrated the feast of Guadalupe on the evening of December 11th. I shared in the joy of the popular feast of December 12th with the people of la Colonia Guadalupe in Soyapango and the people of the parish of Dulce Nombre de María who confirmed the words of Puebla with regard to devotion to Mary (24): *Devotion to Mary forms part of the identity of the Latin American continent*. Thanks to Mary our people bring the history of our country before her and allow this history to be enlightened with the faith of our Church. These are wonderful celebrations that must be maintained. The same could be said about the celebration in Suchitoto where people filled the church on the feast of Saint Lucy.

Yesterday afternoon there was a special gathering in El Centro Ana Guerra de Jesús where the dignity of women who work in the market is promoted.

I want to let the young women and men know that they have a commitment for December 22nd and 23rd, that is, next Saturday afternoon, all night Saturday and Sunday morning. Here in the Cathedral several seminarians will receive Minor Orders. The gathering of young people will probably take place in San José de la Montaña. At the conclusion of the Mass one of the seminarians will give you more information about this.

On December 19th, next Thursday, we will celebrate the feast of Saint Joseph in San Laureano in Ciudad Delgado, Quezaltepeque, and on December 21st in Santo Tomás we will celebrate their patronal feast.

I also want to let you know that the homilies for the first cycle of the Liturgical Year have been gathered together and you can obtain a complete collection of this material which is now on sale.

In our newspaper, *Orientación*, you are able to find a listing of the wonderful programs that will be transmitted by Radio YSAX. I also recommend that you continue to spread the news about our newspaper. As you spread this news about the means of communication of the Archdiocese you are making a wonderful gesture because you show that you are a good Catholic collaborator.

Evelyn Verónica López is recovering her health thanks to her friend, Jesus (she refers to Jesus in this way). Clotilde Pineda de Mejía asks for special prayers during this Mass.

I also want to call to your attention the fact that I have been informed that the Red Cross is in a very difficult economic situation. All those who are aware of the good work that is done by this institution should support their efforts so that this group that has done so much good for our people will be able to continue their work.

As we raise our eyes toward the horizons of the world I am pleased to have read in the newspaper the different ways in which the Church's influence was experienced throughout this past year. The paper stated that as a result of the wonderful attitude of Pope John Paul II, the Church assumed a more active role in the resolution of the great problems occurring in Latin America, specifically Nicaragua and El Salvador where the bishops spoke out openly against the authoritarian regimes of those countries.*

The hierarchy of the Church that gathered together in Manila expressed their obligation to share the mission of the Church by identifying themselves more closely with people who are poor.* With humility they confessed and repented for the lack of congruence between their words and actions which has led people to believe that the Church was not passionately concerned about the rights of the poor and not committed to the total liberation of people from the slavery of injustice and oppression. This morning we have spoken about conversion and so I pray that all the members of our Church might be sincerely converted to work on behalf of those people who are poor.*

A glorious note about the Church ... the famous bishop of North America, Bishop Fulton Sheen, ended his days on this earth. He was more than eighty years old and after a meritorious life he has gone to receive his reward from the Lord. Let us pray for him.

The Pope urged the bishops of Ecuador to illuminate the challenges caused by the unequal distribution of wealth. He told them that these challenges have to be given a gospel orientation and response ... they should look for ways to apply the great principles of the Church's social teaching.³

Events of the week

This morning, instead of giving you a summary of the events that have occurred during the past week, I want to fulfill the Pope's recommendation to the bishops of Ecuador and express my support for the primary event that occurred this week. I will also attempt to speak about other events which the Church must also illuminate since the Church is called to enlighten all the events of history.

Without a doubt the central event of this past week was the announcement of land reform^{4*}. This promise has awakened great expectation in a majority of people, especially agricultural workers. At the same time this promise has also instilled much fear and even hostility in a small powerful minority, especially the large land owners.

I do not want to comment here on the government's plan or the different reactions that this plan has created especially among experts in economics. I do not want to comment on the economic advantages or risks that land reform supposes nor do I want to speak about a method that should be followed in such a reform. I am not an expert in these matters and therefore do not want to enter into that discussion. It is my duty, however, to express my point of view as pastor and to speak about this from the perspective of God's plan for the goods of this earth.

First, the situation of agricultural workers. There is no doubt that the situation of agricultural workers is painful and alarming. The most recent statistics released by the Minister of Agriculture ought to make not only those directly involved in this situation but all the people of El Salvador reflect on this problem. According to the report of the Minister: 67% of women *campesinas* give birth without any medical assistance; 60 out of every 1,000 children born in the rural areas die; only 37% of the families living in the rural areas have access to water; 73% of the children in the rural areas are malnourished; 50% of the rural population cannot read; more than 250,000 families in rural areas live in dwellings with one room and the average number of members in these families is 5-6 persons.⁵

This scandalous situation that our *campesino* brothers and sisters suffer is explained, in large part, by the fact of the unjust and unequal distribution of land that exists in our country. According to the data released by the Minister of Agriculture, 99% of the property owners possess 51% of all the land. In other words, almost the whole population possesses half the land of El Salvador. Thus

only 0.07%, less than 1% of the population, own 40% of the land⁶ ... and the land they own is the best land.

What is the position of the Church at this time? The Church's position is determined by the Second Vatican Council. I am pleased that the matters I preach about here in the Cathedral are supported by the solemn teaching of the Church. The Second Vatican Council states: *In many underdeveloped regions there are large or even extensive rural estates which are only slightly cultivated or lie completely idle for the sake of profit, while the majority of the people either are without land or have only very small fields, and, on the other hand, it is evidently urgent to increase the productivity of the fields. Not infrequently those who are hired to work for the landowners or who till a portion of the land as tenants receive a wage or income unworthy of a human being, lack decent housing and are exploited by middlemen. Deprived of all security, they live under such personal servitude that almost every opportunity of acting on their own initiative and responsibility is denied to them and all advancement in human culture and all sharing in social and political life is forbidden to them. According to the different cases, therefore, reforms are necessary: that income may grow, working conditions should be improved, security in employment increased, and an incentive to working on one's own initiative given. Indeed, insufficiently cultivated estates should be distributed to those who can make these lands fruitful; in this case, the necessary things and means, especially educational aids and the right facilities for cooperative organization, must be supplied. Whenever, nevertheless, the common good requires expropriation, compensation must be reckoned in equity after all the circumstances have been weighed* (25).

Thus the transformation that is being planned here in El Salvador is supported by the Second Vatican Council. Even clearer and more recent is the teaching of John Paul II. In Oaxaca he said: *In the depressed rural world, the worker, who with his sweat also waters his affliction, cannot wait any longer for full and effective recognition of his dignity, which is not inferior to that of any other social sector. He has the right to be respected and not to be deprived, with maneuvers which are sometimes tantamount to real spoliation of the little that he has. He has the right to be rid of the barriers of exploitation, often made up of intolerable selfishness, against which his best efforts of advancement are shattered. He has the right to real help --- which is not charity or crumbs of justice --- in order that he may have access to the development that his dignity as a man and as a son of God deserves. Therefore it is necessary to act promptly and in depth. It is necessary to carry out bold changes, which are deeply innovatory. It is necessary to undertake urgent reforms without waiting any longer. It cannot be forgotten that the measures to be taken must be adequate. The Church does indeed defend the legitimate right to private property, but she also teaches no less clearly that there is always a social mortgage on all private property, in order that goods may serve the general purpose that God gave them. And if the common good requires it, there should be no hesitation even at expropriation, carried out in due form*⁷

I do not want to tire you with more references but I brought here with me words that the Pope spoke in Puebla, words written by the Guatemalan and Honduran Episcopal Conferences and references to the Medellin Documents ... all these document fully support the need and the obligation for land reform in our country.⁸

To those who want to call the government's decision some form of communism I remind you of the pastoral letter of the bishops of Nicaragua in which they speak about socialism and state: *At times we hear people express the fear that the present process is moving us toward socialism and we are asked about our thoughts concerning this matter*⁹. The bishops then express their thoughts: *There is a form of socialism that cannot be tolerated because it is neither evangelical nor Christian ... but there is another form of socialism that does not contradict in any way and in fact actualizes*

*the gospel of social justice in the world*¹⁰. You are able to read this document and in fact I strongly urge everyone to read and reflect on this document because today the question of socialism is a very real problem in our present situation. But what I have stated is the doctrine of the Church.

At this time you ask me: what is the position of the Archdiocese. You already know the answer. Our position cannot be anything except a position that attempts to apply the general principles of the Church ... a position that points out the rights and obligations of the different protagonists of the present plan for land reform.

In the first place I want to say that as a result of defending the line of thought of the Archdiocese, which is also the line of thought of the Church, we have suffered and will continue to suffer because of our identification with this way of thinking. Such is the case of Father De Sebastián with whose concepts the Archdiocese is in full agreement. We are saddened by the fact that people who are defending their own selfish interests have attempted to slander him and create situations for possible serious threats against his life.¹¹ I repeat that, in substance, Father De Sebastián is following the pastoral guidelines of the Archdiocese in the matter that we are dealing with. He can rely on the full support of our Archdiocese.

With regard to the government and the armed forces, do not create in people false hopes. If land reform has been promised, then, despite the reaction of the minority and despite the reaction of 2000 land owners who possess 40% of the land, fulfill this promise. Do not allow yourselves to be intimidated.* Even more so, do not allow yourselves to be bribed. Money is powerful and these people have millions of dollars*. You also confront a great danger and I point this out because this can also cause our people to become frustrated. Do not allow yourselves to become divided. Join together when the struggle is difficult. You should not be seeking some political advantage since you are not in government positions to fight about matters of power but rather your primary concern must be the defense of people*. The government not only has a right to engage in land reform but also has an obligation to do this*. The words of John Paul II should be your motto: *Remove the barriers of exploitation from the campesinos and the poor.*¹²

It is also important that the present government should undertake this reform in a way that they are not seen as giving gifts to people in order to gain their support. Land reform is a conquest that people won and merited because of the blood that was shed in this struggle.* Therefore we say to the different organizations: we admire your struggle and your just demands and in all of this you are and have been engaged in a long struggle, a struggle that you did not initiate but one that was begun by the Church twenty centuries ago as the Church attempted to bring greater justice into the world.* Again the government should not make people feel as though they are receiving a gift in order to make them passive and quiet. Rather this reform should be seen as the fruit that they have obtained as the result of a struggle in which they became active participants in the political and economic processes of the country.*

The government has not initiated a process but rather must incorporate themselves into a process that has been undertaken by the people.* This is our great hope, namely, that the government and the people come to an understanding with regard to their just demands. We always said to the previous government that there is no problem between the Church and the State but rather the problem is between the State and the people and the Church is always with the people.*

The land reform plan should also not be carried out with the intention of finding an exit from the capitalistic economic model that continues the process of development ... a model in which wealth is accumulated and concentrated in the hands of a few people, at the present time, in the hands of

individuals in the industrial, commercial and financial sectors. This plan should not be carried out in order to create passivity in people or impede them from organizing or increasing their political participation in political, economic and social concerns. Land reform should not make the *campesinos* dependent on the State but should allow them to be free in the eyes of the State.* More than ever before, if the government wants to win people's trust, they have to be vigilant with regard to those remnants of repression that are still experienced by people in many parts of the country. Be very vigilant! We know that elements of ORDEN and other officials are not in agreement with this new birth of freedom that is being offered to people and thus in some parts of the country people are becoming the victims of official acts of violence.

Finally land reform in El Salvador should embrace a broad perspective and not only be oriented toward a better distribution of land but should also include the redistribution of all of our resources. All *campesinos* and all people should have access to doctors, schools, hospitals, electricity, water, etc.* ... in a word, all people should be able to rejoice in an integral development.

I also wish to address at this moment and on a matter so serious and delicate the economically powerful sectors that will be affected by agrarian reform. I want to direct some words to you, my dear sisters and brothers, not as a judge or an enemy, but as a pastor and as a brother Salvadoran to all Salvadorans. I am only concerned about inviting you to be mindful of your great responsibility at this time, your responsibility to collaborate in the process that enables us to resolve the economic, political and social crisis of the nation and to do this without recourse to violence. The present shootings and above all, the fear that is instilled by the rumor that the right is importing arms into the country and paying mercenaries ... these actions are not ways to defend the well-being of the country. I want to remind you about the words of Medellin in this regard: *If they jealously retain their privileges and defend them through violence, they are responsible to history for provoking "explosive revolutions of despair."*(27)* These are the words of Medellin that are directed toward the oligarchy ... but there is more: *The peaceful future of the countries of Latin America depends to a large extent on their attitude.** Through the cries of the people of El Salvador, through the attempts at land reform, through the signs of the times, God is calling out today as he called out through the voice of John the Baptist: *Whoever has two cloaks should share with the person who has none. And whoever has food should do the same* (28).*

During these days Mother Theresa of Calcutta has given us a great example. When she traveled to receive the Nobel Peace Prize she decided not to offer a gala banquet to celebrate the award. Instead, the 30,000.00 dollars that would have been spent on the dinner was set aside to help the poor in India¹³.* Now let us reflect together with the mind of Mother Theresa: what an insult to the world to spend in one night money on a banquet that could be used to help four hundred people for a year.

My dear sisters and brothers, you who are wealthy in the economic sphere, it is probable that at this time the proposed plan creates in you discouragement, fear, and perhaps hatred and even leads you to decide to oppose with every means possible the forward progress of this plan. There are probably some of you who would prefer to destroy everything even though this action might radically harm the economy of the country rather than share with those whose labor you have used for so many years.*

The Church that has been at your service says: now is time to reveal yourselves as generous Christians and love as Jesus has loved, who being rich made himself poor for our sake.(29)* Remember that the call of Puebla to make a preferential option on behalf of poor people is not some form of demagoguery that attempts to create distinctions among the classes. Puebla clearly says that this is a call to all social classes so that they take up as their own problem the problem of the poor

which is also the problem of Jesus who at the time of our judgment will say: *whatever you did for one of these least sisters and brothers of mine, you did for me* (30)¹⁴. Your productive experience, your talents which in part have allowed you to accumulate so much wealth ... continue to develop these ... but now do not seek your own benefit but rather seek that which is best for the larger community of El Salvador.*

I also want to direct some words to agricultural workers, to those who may not be organized and who might be inclined to remain passive before this decisive plan, to those who are content to wait and see if they will have the opportunity to benefit from this reform, to those who want to remain as spectators, who want to see if the government fulfills its promise ... I want to remind all of you of the words of Medellín: *Also responsible for injustice are those who remain passive for fear of sacrifice and personal risk implied by any courageous and effective action. Justice, and therefore peace, conquer by means of a dynamic action of awakening (concientización) and organization of popular sectors, which are capable of pressing public officials who are often impotent in their social projects without public support* (31). I express my solidarity to the Minister of Agriculture and with his hope that he trusts that the *campesinos* have put aside their silence and will defend their rights which for so long have been denied them, that is, that they will defend the process of land reform and will not allow the process to become side-tracked ... will not allow this process to promote new forms of dependence, oppression or exploitation¹⁵.*

Another word to members of political organizations and popular military organizations. During this past week the struggle for just demands has intensified. Armed groups, at least some of them, have engaged in violent military operations. A Popular Army seems to be forming. The Church in Medellín recognized the right of groups to pressure and urge public officials because often times without such pressure these groups are unable to realize their social projects. Even more so at this time when a certain sector of society is interested in halting the process of land reform, popular organizations have a special responsibility to apply pressure so that this plan is realized and so that those most in need benefit from this process.* This, however, should not be done through methods of armed violence. Medellín recognizes that *people in the face of injustice and illegitimate resistance to change put their trust in violence and this attitude frequently finds its ultimate motivation in noble impulses of justice and solidarity* (32). But we must also take into consideration these other words of Medellín: *If we consider then the totality of the circumstances of our countries and if we take into account the Christian preference for peace, the enormous difficulty of a civil war, the logic of violence, the atrocities it engenders, the risk of provoking foreign intervention, illegitimate as it may be, the difficulty of building a regime of justice and freedom while participating in a process of violence, we earnestly desire that the dynamism of the awakened and organized community be put to the service of peace and justice* (33).

The position of the Archdiocese with regard to the struggles and just demands of these organizations is the same as that of Pope Paul VI: *we attempt to understand their afflictions and change them, not into hate and violence, but into the strong and peaceful energy of constructive works* (34).

We do not approve of the assassinations that occurred this past week and we are repulsed by the actions that took place in Nejapa. The people of that area are horrified. Do not take justice into your own hands but urge the government to fulfill their obligation in this regard. Those who shed the blood of their sisters and brothers should be aware of the words of the Lord: *those who take the sword will perish by the sword* (35) and that *the blood of those who were assassinated cry out to heaven* (36).

For a moment I want to refer to the pressure that those who are harvesting cotton used and I call upon all those who work in this area to have recourse to dialogue ... let the cotton plantation owners and the Bloque¹⁶ dialogue so that the channels of communication that our people need might be opened.

We have been asked to speak about the situation of those working in the market and again, here too, we encourage people to participate in the process of dialogue so that life in the market might be normalized because this is the place where so many families obtain their living.

I have here a special plea from the Peacekeepers who speak on behalf of a woman who is among the hostages in the market of San Jacinto. I invite the Ligas Populares 28 de Febrero to come to an accord with the authorities so that this embarrassing situation can be resolved.

With regard to my intervention in the case of the abduction of Jaime Batlle ... I repeat: I am always willing to do this, but I am not so ingenious as to accept whatever statement is made. You must identify yourself and I, for my part, will do whatever I can so that freedom can be restored to this individual who unjustly has been deprived of liberty.

I have here a letter of thanks from the Hill family who speak about the abduction of Jaime Hill Argüello: *We want to express our gratitude for your gesture with regard to the situation of our brother. He is the one who is now a victim of injustice and threats and for this reason you have come to his defense. Our brother was abducted on October 31st. We do not want to dramatize our feelings but you can easily understand how our parents, the wife and children of our brother, and all who love him ... you can understand how they feel.* Once again in the name of this family, and in the name of the families of all those who have been abducted, I beg you, as the Pope did in Ireland¹⁷, I beg you on my knees, if it is necessary, to return freedom to the people, our sisters and brothers and thus restore tranquility to these beloved homes.

Finally, I want to address Christians and, especially, the clergy and religious. My dear sisters and brothers, at this time when I am asking all the people of El Salvador to participate in the process of a more just distribution of our wealth and resources, it seems important to me that priests and religious women and men, without involving ourselves in matters that are outside our competency but in communion with the bishop and from the perspective of the gospel and the authentic teaching of the Church, should illuminate the people with regard to the rights and duties that the present situation imposes on them. We, as Church, should also review how we should redistribute our income and resources so as to serve the people in a better way.

John the Baptist was asked the question: *what then should we do?* (37). We should also ask the precursor: what do we have to do so that the priests who work in the poor areas can have the same possibilities as those who work in rich areas? What do we have to do so that there is a proportionality with regard to the number of priests and pastoral services for those who live in the rural areas and for those who live in the city? As Medellín states: *The present situation demands from bishops, priests, religious and laymen the spirit of poverty which, breaking the bond of the egotistical possession of temporal goods, stimulates the Christian to order organically the power and finances in favor of the common good. The poverty of the Church and of its members in Latin America ought to be a sign and a commitment --- a sign of the inestimable value of the poor in the eyes of God, an obligation of solidarity with those who suffer* (38).

I hope that we continue to make every effort so that we are able to live the ideals presented to the religious in the documents of Medellín: *We hope that they (the religious communities) will be*

able more and more to effect the sharing of their goods with others, especially with the most needy, dividing among them not only superfluities, but also necessities, and willing to put at the disposal of the human community the buildings and the instruments of their work (39).

The message of this Sunday is a message of joy. The need to be austere should not take away our joy. We cannot have a profound joy without the cross of austerity. I believe that our people who know how to smile and be happy, who are not naturally inclined to resentment or hatred (unless someone else poisons them with these attitudes) ... I believe people will learn to smile and to be truly happy when they undertake a true transformation: remove from the slavery of sin the nature that God has created to be shared with all God's children. So be it.*

¹ *Roman Missal*, Rite of peace.

² See *Misión de la Iglesia en medio de la crisis del país*, Fourth Pastoral Letter of Mons. Oscar A Romero, archbishop of San Salvador (6 August 1979), pp. 49-50.

³ See Allocution of John Paul II in the visit "ad Limina Apostolorum" to the Bishops of Ecuador (11 December 1979), *Osservatore Romano*, 23 December 1979.

⁴ See "Presentación del ministro de Agricultura y Ganadería, Enrique Alvarez Córdova, en la cadena de radio y televisión, el 11 de diciembre de 1979", *La Prensa Gráfica*, 14 December 1979.

⁵ See *Ibid.*

⁶ See *Ibid.*

⁷ See Discourse of John Paul II to the rural and indigenous people in Oaxaca (29 January 1979), *Osservatore Romano*, 11 February 1979.

⁸ The documents Mons. Romero is referring to are the following: Discourse of John Paul II at the opening of the Third General Conference of Latin American Bishops in Puebla (28 January 1979); *Unidos en esperanza*, Message to the Bishops of Guatemala (28 June 1976); *Sobre el desarrollo del campesinado en Honduras*, Pastoral Letter of the Bishops of Honduras (8 January 1970); Medellín, *Justicia*, 14. See *Manuscritos de los esquemas de la homilias de monseñor Oscar A Romero*, Oficina de la causa de canonización de monseñor Oscar A Romero, Arzobispado de San Salvador.

⁹ *Compromiso cristiano para una nueva Nicaragua*, Pastoral Letter of the Bishop's Conference of Nicaragua (7 November 1979), *ECA* 374, (1979), pp. 1104-1105.

¹⁰ See *Ibid.*

¹¹ See *La Prensa Gráfica*, 12 December 1979.

¹² See Discourse of John Paul II to the peasants and indigenous people in Oaxaca (29 January 1979), *op. cit.*

¹³ See *La Prensa Gráfica*, 11 December 1979.

¹⁴ See *Mensaje a los pueblos de América Latina*, 3.

¹⁵ See "Presentación del ministro de Agricultura y Ganadería...", *op. cit.*

¹⁶ Bloque Popular Revolucionario.

¹⁷ See Homily of John Paul II in Drogheda, Ireland (29 September 1979), *Osservatore Romano*, 7 October 1979.

Marginal References (1) Ph 4,4; (2) Is 7,14; (3) Lk 3,1; (4) Zp 3,15b-17; (5) DV 4; (6) Lk 3,15; (7) Lk 3,16; (8) Ph 4,5b; (9) Ph 4,5b; (10) Ph 4,4; (11) Ph 4,6; (12) Ph 4,7; (13) Lk 1, 52-53; (14) Ph 4,5a; (15) Zp 3,11-13; (16) Lk 3,4-5; (17) Lk 3,7-9; (18) Lk 3,10-14; (19) Mt 21,31; (20) Lk 3,11; (21) Lk 3,13; (22) Lk 3,15-16; (23) M 1,3; (24) P 283; (25) GS 71; (26) GS 64; (27) M 2,17; (28) Lk 3,11; (29) 2Cor 8,9; (30) Mt 25,40; (31) M 2,18; (32) M 2,19; (33) M 2,19; (34) M 2,19; (35) Mt 26,52; (36) Gn 4,10; (37) Lk 3,10; (38) M 14,7; (39) M 14,16.