

## POVERTY OF THE BEATITUDES, OUR STRENGTH

**Sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time  
February 17, 1980**

*Jeremiah 17:5-8*

*1 Corinthians 15:12, 16-20*

*Luke 6:17, 20-26*

My dear sisters and brothers.

First of all I want to congratulate you because at this present time you have taken on the true identity of the People of God. I am referring to a commentary that was made last Sunday by an elder politician from Venezuela who was visiting our country and came to the Cathedral out of curiosity. I believe that our celebration of Mass is more than some political meeting but I also know that some people come here out of political curiosity ... such people disfigure our Sunday gathering. This man that I have referred to is not only a politician but is also a great Christian. He told me: *I realized that the people who come to the Cathedral are a true Christian assembly ... these people sing, they pray, and at communion time I was greatly impressed by the long procession of people who approached the Eucharist.* His words gave me great joy because I do not intend in any way to engage in politics. I do not intend in any way to engage in politics. If for a need of the moment I am casting light on my country's political situation, it is as pastor, it is from the gospel. My preaching is a light that must enlighten the country's ways, to offer as Church what the Church has to offer. Therefore I am grateful for the fact that as we come together we give a true identity to this assembly, the identity of the People of God. As People of God we live in the midst of many other people, people who are citizens of the nation. Yet it is also here that we experience the responsibility to mediate the gospel so that each one, in their own particular situation, might become one who multiplies the Word and one who enlightens the paths of the country.

Situations are always very important and indeed, what could be more important than the situation of the gospel where God became incarnated into all human situations? At this time in our country there is fear and confusion and insecurity and uncertainty. How necessary it is for us to hear a word of calmness, a word whose reach is infinite: and that word is the gospel.

Today another situation is approaching us because we find ourselves at a time when we are about to begin the season of Lent. As the People of God we cannot forget our liturgical journey. Today we are celebrating the sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time. When the Christmas season concluded and until the beginning of Lent, these past weeks are referred to as Ordinary Time.

Now the season of Ordinary Time is interrupted because Wednesday we are going to enter another special season of the year, the Lenten season, which will be followed by the Easter season. When the Easter season is concluded with the celebration of Pentecost, we will then return to Ordinary Time, to the seventh week of Ordinary Time. As we temporarily leave Ordinary Time and begin the season of Lent I believe that the time is appropriate to call upon all the People of God to prepare themselves to wholeheartedly enter this great spiritual retreat that has a universal character and that is referred to as Lent.

Wednesday, Ash Wednesday, we will begin the season of Lent. God willing, we will open the season of Lent here at 7:00pm on Wednesday. I invite everyone to participate in the impressive ceremony of the ashes which is a sign of our mortality. Let us use this time for serious reflection. There is no more precious time to help our nation than this time of Lent, especially if during this time we pray and do penance. We are not political persons; we do not put our trust in merely human powers. We are, above all, Christians, and we know that if the Lord does not build our civilization all labor in vain who build it. (1) We know that our power comes from prayer and from our turning toward God.

Let us live during this time that will prepare us for the long journey that we are going to begin on Wednesday, a journey toward Easter and Pentecost (the two great goals of Lent). People do not mortify themselves during Lent out of a sick desire to suffer. God did not make us for suffering,. If we fast and do penance and pray, we do this in light of a very positive goal: to overcome self so that we might participate in the Easter resurrection. We do not celebrate a risen Christ who is distinct from us, but rather during Lent we prepare ourselves to rise with him to a new life and to become new people, new people that our country needs right now. Let us not just shout slogans about new structures. New structures will be worthless without new persons to administer and give life to the new structures that the country needs. (2)

Then comes Pentecost, the coming of the Spirit. Let us prepare ourselves so that our hearts might be clean vessels, disposed to receive the Spirit of God with all the strength of holiness, so that we might transform the face of the earth. This is what is lacking in our country: a sense of the Spirit of God, a sense of the resurrection and renewal of life.

Lent invites us to look within ourselves and to renew ourselves. Thus I believe that today's readings are a call to engage in this interior renewal. Today's readings are a wonderful prologue to the celebration of Lent and I believe that the Puebla document contains a statement that, rightly understood, fills us with hope: *Poverty is a palpable reality in Latin America --- the stamp that marks the great mass of people. At the same time, these masses are not only open to receive the Beatitudes and the Father's predilection, but are capable of being the genuine protagonists of their own development* (3). The poor are a sign of God's presence in Latin America. The masses of our nations are poor and for this reason they are capable of receiving God's gifts. When filled with God, they are able to transform their own societies. I am pleased that Puebla not only states that the poor are a sign of God's presence in Latin America but also speaks about young people in the same way. My dear young women and men, you, like those who are poor, are signs of God's presence among us.

*The poor and young people constitute the wealth and the hope of the Church in Latin America. Therefore their evangelization is a priority.* (4) In other words, our Church experiences a special affinity toward and a special responsibility for the majority of the poor and for young people. The poor and the young are going to rebuild our country and we truly believe that this is what will happen if we prepare them in such a way that the Risen Lord might find in these groups people who are capable of rebuilding. Let us not lose hope because if the poor and the young are the hope of Latin America then there is much reason for hope because in El Salvador there are many poor and many young women and men.\*

Therefore I entitle my homily today with the words of a text from the documents of Medellin when they speak about poverty. (5) Poverty is an accusation, a spirit and a commitment. Thus as a general theme I entitle the homily: *the poverty of the Beatitudes, power of the people's true liberation*.\* Medellin refers to the three points that I will develop as the power of liberation: First,

poverty is a divine accusation; Second, poverty is a spirit; Third, poverty is a commitment. God willing we will have a clear idea of that which I have repeated very often, namely, that the Church has assumed a preferential option for the poor.\* And the Church will only be a true Church if she is converted and commits herself to those people who suffer and are poor.\*

### **Poverty is a divine accusation**

Let us listen to the words of the bishops gathered in Medellin, - but I am also going to reinforce this idea with today's liturgical texts - how is it that poverty is an accusation? Medellin states: *Poverty, as a lack of the goods of this world necessary to live worthily as men and women, is in itself evil. The prophets denounced it as contrary to the will of the Lord and most of the time as the fruit of the injustice and the sin of individuals* (6).\*

What does Jesus do in the gospel account of the Beatitudes? How wonderful to be able to reflect with Jesus who came down the mountain! (7) The gospels use beautiful expressions that describe some profound ways of viewing Jesus. Let us behold Jesus as he comes down the mountain, as he comes down from the heights to mingle with the people: coming down from the mountain he began to address the people with the words that were proclaimed in the gospel: *Blessed are you who are poor, for the kingdom of God is yours* (8).

In contrast to the four Beatitudes there appears a denunciation ... a denunciation of the fact that there are poor people, that there are people who are hungry, that there are people who suffer. Those individuals are blessed because they suffer and weep and are hungry but why do these realities exist? Today's gospel is wonderful as it points out the causes of these realities: *Woe to you who are rich, because you have received your consolation. Woe to you who are filled now, for you will be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will grieve and weep* (9). The voice of Jesus echoes the words of all the prophets of the Old Testament. How great are the prophets when they denounce those who join house to house and land to land in an attempt to become owners of the country. (10)\*

The existence of poverty as a lack of what is necessary is an indictment. My brothers and sisters, those who say that the bishop, the Church, and the priests have caused the bad state of the country want to paper over the reality\*. Those who have created the evil are those who have made possible the hideous social injustice that our people live in\*. Thus, the poor have shown the Church the true way to go. A Church that does not join the poor in order to speak out on behalf of the poor and against the injustices committed against them, is not the true Church of Jesus Christ.\*

I want to take advantage of this opportunity to tell you about the theme of my discourse at the University of Louvain, a topic that was also the general theme for many other conferences that have been and will be presented throughout the year at the University, namely, politics and faith. I chose to nuance this concept by speaking about *the political dimensions of faith from the perspective of the option for the poor*. I attempted to explain how for us, here in El Salvador, people who are poor are the key to understanding the Christian faith. I told them at Louvain: *Our world in El Salvador is not an abstraction. It is not an example of what is meant by "the world" in developed countries like yours. It is a world made up in the vast majority of poor and oppressed women and men. The world of the poor is the key to understanding the Christian faith and the Church's activity. The poor are the ones who tell us what the world is and what service the Church must offer to the world. It is the poor who tell us what the polis is, what the city is and what it means for the Church to really live in the world. Allow me, I said, to explain from the perspective of the poor among my people, whom I represent, the situation and the activity of our Church in the*

*world in which we live*<sup>1</sup>. I went on to tell them about what is happening to our Church here in El Salvador and what we are doing.

First, *we become incarnate among the poor*. We want a Church that is really side by side with the poor, with the people of El Salvador. As we draw near to the poor, we find we are gradually uncovering the genuine face of the Suffering Servant of Yahweh. We are getting to know, from first hand experience, the mystery of Christ who became human and became poor for us.

What else does the Church do here? I said: *it proclaims good news to the poor*. I do not mean this in the demagogic sense of shutting the door on others. Quite the opposite! *Those who have for centuries listened to bad news and live even worse realities are now hearing from the Church the word of Jesus: "The reign of God is near; it is yours!"(11). Blessed are you poor, for the reign of God is yours". (12) Hence the Church has good news to proclaim to the rich as well. They are to turn to the poor and allow them to share in the riches of God's reign*<sup>2</sup>, God's reign that belongs to the poor.\*

Another thing that the Church does in El Salvador, I said, *is its commitment to defend the poor. The poor masses of our land find in the Church the voice of Israel's prophets. There are among us those who, as the prophets said, sell the just ones for money and the poor for a pair of sandals.(13)\* They are those who pile up spoils and plunder in their palaces (14), who crush the poor(15), who bring on a reign of violence while reclining on beds of ivory(16), who join house to house and field to field so as to take up all there is and remain alone in the land(17). The words of the prophets are not distant voices that we read with reverence in our liturgy. They are daily realities, whose cruelty and vehemence we live each day*<sup>3</sup>.

Therefore, I told them, *the Church suffers the fate of the poor which is persecution*. Our Church glories that it has mingled the blood of its priests, its catechists, and its communities with that of the massacred people and has continually borne the mark of persecution. Because it disquiets, it is slandered and its voice that cries out against injustice is disregarded.

In the second part of my discourse I dealt with the way in which the Church has been enriched through her incarnation in the socio-political world, in the world of people who are poor. I spoke about the way in which the Church has uncovered a clearer awareness of sin. Indeed, this is what we are also speaking about today as we state that poverty is a denunciation of sin. As the Church draws closer to people who are poor the Church understands that sin is serious. *Sin killed the Son of God and sin is what continues to kill the children of God. We see that basic truth of the Christian faith daily in the situation of our country. It is impossible to offend God without offending one's brother or sister. It is not a matter of sheer routine that I insist once again on the existence in our country of structures of sin. They are sinful because they produce the fruits of sin, the death of Salvadorans --- the swift death brought by repression or the long drawn out, but no less real, death from structural oppression. That is why we have denounced the sin of injustice.*<sup>4</sup>

This mystery of poverty also enables us to understand better the redemption of Jesus Christ who became like us in order to redeem us from our sins. Thus the mystery of poverty enables us to understand the meaning of God. God wishes to give us the gift of life and everyone who takes away life or damages life --- mutilating, torturing, repressing --- is showing us also by contrast the divine image of the God of life, of the God who respects the freedom of the human person.

This is the first idea of my homily and I am happy to have been able to express this idea with these considerations that I was able to share in Belgium, a very structured country, and in speaking

about these matters I was able to help them understand what can be very difficult for them, namely, that the Church is not involved in politics but rather from the perspective of the prophetic word of God, the Church is denouncing a reality that speaks for itself, is denouncing the injustice inflicted on people, inflicted on those who are poor.\*

Poverty is also spiritual because it cries out and denounces the Church herself. This thought is expressed in the document of Puebla: *Commitment to the poor and oppressed and the rise of grassroots communities have helped the Church to discover the evangelizing potential of the poor. For the poor challenge the Church constantly, summoning it to conversion. Many of the poor incarnate in their lives the evangelical values of solidarity, service, simplicity, and openness to accepting the gift of God* (18).\* Everyone who accuses must be ready to be accused. If the Church accuses others of injustice, it must also be ready to hear itself accused and is obliged to be converted. And the poor are the constant cry that point out not only social injustice but also our own Church's scant generosity.\*

### **Poverty is a spirit**

Thus we see that poverty is first of all a denunciation, but poverty is also a spirit and I want to speak about this aspect today. It is interesting to read the documents of Medellin when they speak about this dimension of poverty: *Spiritual poverty is the theme of the poor of Yahweh. Spiritual poverty is the attitude of opening up to God, the ready disposition of one who hopes for everything from the Lord. Although he values the goods of this world, he does not become attached to them and he recognizes the higher values of the riches of the Kingdom* (19).

Poverty is a spirituality, a Christian attitude and the soul's openness to God. It is for this reason that Puebla stated that the poor are the hope of Latin America. They are the hope because they are the ones who are more open to receive God's gifts. Thus Jesus says with great emotion: *Blessed are you who are poor, for the Kingdom of God is yours* (20). You are the ones most able to understand what is not understood by those who are on their knees before and trust in false idols. You who do not have those idols, you who do not put your trust in them because you have no money or power, you who are destitute of everything, know that the poorer you are, the more you possess God's kingdom, provided you truly live that spirituality. The poverty that Jesus Christ here sanctifies is not simply a material poverty, not just having nothing --- that is evil. It is a poverty that awakens consciousness, a poverty that accepts the cross and sacrifice, but not out of mere compliance, but because it knows this is God's will. Therefore we become holy according to the degree to which we make poverty a part of our spirituality and to the degree in which we hand ourselves over to the Lord and show our openness to God. Then from the perspective of this holiness we will know how to be the best liberator of our people. The Church is shaping these liberators of the people. You, my dear Christians, are liberators of the people according to the way in which your poverty becomes a spirituality.

Let us look at the context in which Jesus proclaims the Beatitudes so that we can better understand the meaning of his words. We cannot separate the context of Jesus' words from the whole history of Israel. How did Israel come into existence? Israel was born as the result of God's promise to Abraham, an old man, sterile like his wife who was unable to bear children. God told Abraham: *Look up at the sky and count the stars, if you can. Just so shall your descendents be* (21). Israel comes into existence as a result of poverty, a reality with an almost absolute limitation, that is, Abraham and his wife were unable to have children. God tells them that their descendents shall become a people. With faith Abraham accepts God's words and the people of Israel became a reality. God then made a promise to this new people: *I give you this land as a possession* (22).

Through Moses, the leader of the people, the descendants of Abraham take possession of the Promised Land where God also offers them his law, that is, God establishes a covenant with them. But the people were not faithful and as a result of their infidelity they were led into exile. During the time of exile the people longed to return to the land that God had given them and that was taken away from them as a result of their sin. Here we also see another sign of the poverty of the people because the prophets call them to repentance. As the people heed this call they are forgiven and the people leave Babylon and return to their homeland and rejoice at being able to take possession of their homeland once again. In this land many political changes occur but now what we are most concerned with is that period when the Roman Empire takes possession of Israel and places the people under the control of their administration and army. Now the people are dominated by a foreign power. Jesus comes to these people who are dominated by Rome, to these people who are subject to a foreign power, to an imperial power. In the midst of these people Jesus preaches and says: *Bless are you who are poor, for the kingdom of God is yours (23)\**.

I have reminded you about this context so that we do not spiritualize the Beatitudes of the gospel. In the gospel of Saint Matthew, in a reflection that is more difficult to understand, we read: *Blessed are the poor in spirit (24)*. Many people have distorted this phrase in such a way that almost everyone is seen as poor, even those who oppress others. This is not true and in the context of the gospel the *poor in spirit* of Saint Matthew and the *poor* of Saint Luke refer to those who are lacking, those who are suffering oppression, and those who are in need of God in order to enter into a new situation.

Jesus comes into the midst of this situation not with weapons or with some political revolutionary movement but rather presents a doctrine that encompasses the great liberation from sin, a doctrine that promises eternal life. He gives a vision to those who struggle for the liberation of people. When Jesus says *the poor in spirit* he is referring to the Israelites whose land has been taken from them. He is telling them that *you too must be freed again; you must remove the burden of those who have invaded your land but you must do this from the perspective of a spirituality of poverty*.

When Mary, the virgin, the most spiritual being of Yahweh, sings her praises to God who will free those who are humble and poor there appears to be a political dimension to her words: *The hungry he has filled with good things and the rich he has sent away empty (25)*. Mary also proclaims words that today might be considered words of insurrection: *He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones but lifted up the lowly (26)*. This is the political dimension of our faith, a faith that was lived by Mary and also lived by Jesus. Jesus was an authentic patriot of the people who lived under foreign domination and certainly he dreamed of the time when the people would be free. But meanwhile he had to pay tribute to Caesar: *Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar but do not give to Caesar what belongs to God, rather give to God what belongs to God (27)\**.

This is the spirituality that this morning's first reading has presented to us in a more explicit manner. It is most probable that when Jesus spoke these words he was mindful of the words of the prophets. Today as the Church presents the gospel text of Jesus proclaiming the Beatitudes, a text in which those who are poor and hungry and weeping and dying are called blessed, the Church also presents the words of the prophet Jeremiah: *Cursed is the man who trusts in human beings, who seeks his strength in flesh, whose heart turns away from the Lord. He is like a barren bush in the desert that enjoys no change of season, but stands in a lava waste, a salt and empty earth. Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose hope is the Lord (28)*. A vision of aridity for someone who has put their confidence in the things of the earth. And so woe to you who are rich!, because if you now appear like leafy trees, tomorrow you will be dry trees, like the aridity of the steppe,

because of your own egoism.\* Can we not hear the echo of Christ in the words of Jeremiah? *Blessed are those who trust in the Lord, whose hope is the Lord. They are like a tree planted beside the waters that stretches out its roots to the stream: it fears not the heat when it comes, its leaves stay green. In the year of drought it shows no distress, but still bears fruit* (29).

These are the people who are truly poor. The spirituality of those who are poor is centered on a great trust in the Lord and the curse of the rich is that they separate themselves from the Lord and place all their trust in flesh, that is, in earthly values. Therefore my sisters and brothers, it is not prestigious for the Church to be with the powerful, rather the prestige of the Church is the following: to experience the poor as her own, to know that the Church has a mission here on earth, namely, to call all people to conversion, and this includes those who are rich. The rich are called to change and be saved in the same way as those who are poor because the poor are the only ones who are called blessed.\*

Here, as I speak about the spirit of poverty, I want to reflect on the second reading because here we find the basis of our hope. Saint Paul writes to the Christians in Corinth where some erroneous ideas were being expressed concerning the resurrection: *there is no resurrection!* People laugh at Paul when he speaks about the resurrection, but Paul clings to his faith. Last Sunday we spoke about the fact that there were eyewitnesses to Jesus' resurrection: *five hundred brothers at once, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep ... Last of all he appeared to me telling me that I was persecuting his Church ... and I was not one who easily believed all these stories about the Church ... but I have seen him and I have converted and now I am preaching him* (30).

Saint Paul is a wonderful witness of the resurrection because if there was ever a person who did not want to believe in Jesus or the resurrection it was Saul, the persecutor. He believed that the Christians were deceiving his Jewish companions and for this reason he persecuted them. Paul, convinced that Jesus was not alive, encounters the living Jesus and now he is willing to give his life in defense of this great truth and so he tells the Corinthians: *Christ is risen!\** *And if you say that the dead do not rise, why have I seen the risen Christ?* (31). If Christ has been raised then the resurrection of women and men exists and if the resurrection exists, then we have reason to believe and hope. If Jesus had not risen then we would be the most miserable of people because our faith would be based on a lie. But Christ is risen! Christ lives! Christ is the reason for the great faith and trust and the spirituality of those who are poor ... this is our God, as we sing in our popular hymn,<sup>5</sup> *the God of the poor\**.

### **Poverty is a commitment**

Lastly, I want to leave you today with this idea, namely, that poverty is a force for liberation because, in addition to being an accusation of sin and a force of Christian spirituality, it is a commitment.

First of all this word for me means that we are Christian. I must give an example of being a Christian. The same could be said for all of you, my brother priests, and for you, religious, and for all baptized people who call yourselves Christian. Listen to the words of Medellín (32): *Poverty as a commitment, through which one assumes voluntarily and lovingly the conditions of the needy of this world in order to bear witness to the evil which it represents and to spiritual liberty in the face of material goods, follows the example of Christ who took to himself all the consequences of men's sinful condition and who being rich become poor in order to redeem us* (33). This is the commitment of being a Christian: to follow Christ in his incarnation. If Christ, the God of majesty,

became a lowly human and lived with the poor and even died on a cross like a slave, then our Christian life should also be lived in the same way. The Christian who does not want to live this commitment of solidarity with the poor is not worthy to be called Christian.\*

Christ invites us not to fear persecution. Believe me, sisters and brothers, anyone committed to the poor must suffer the same fate as the poor. And in El Salvador we know the fate of the poor: to be taken away, to be tortured, to be jailed, to be found dead\*.

Let whoever desires this world's privileges and not the persecutions that come from this commitment listen to the awesome paradox in today's gospel: *Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude and insult you and denounce your name as evil on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice and leap for joy on that day! Behold, your reward will be great in heaven* (34).\* With joy and gratitude I wish to congratulate our priests. It is when they are most committed to the poor that they are most defamed. It is when they are most at the side of our people in their wretchedness that they are most slandered. I wish to rejoice with the religious women and men who have taken their stand with our people, even to the point of heroically suffering with them. I also rejoice with the Christian communities and with the catechists who stay at their posts while cowards flee.\*

Let those who would flee the effects of persecution, of slander, of degradation, listen to what Jesus says this Sunday: *Woe to you when all speak well of you for their ancestors treated the false prophets in this way* (35). How sad is the praise of the world! If Christians who suffer slander and are persecuted wanted to be well off, it would be easy for them to betray their Christian commitment. They then would kneel before their wealth like so many others who live well in this world. *But woe to you!*\*

Today's second reading also confirms the truth that poverty is a commitment. The extreme manifestations of poverty are sin and death. There are no more miserable persons than those who are sinful and no one is as poor as a corpse. It is for this reason that Jesus' redemption points out that all earthly liberators are lacking, that is, they are incomplete as long as they do not free sinners from sin, as long as they do not free the dead from death. This freedom is only offered by the great Liberator. Blessed are they who struggle to achieve the political liberation of the world and who are also mindful of redemption that saves people from sin and death.

Therefore today's second reading affirms the heart of those people who struggle for their resurrection. They believe in the resurrection and do not doubt that Christ is risen and, from the position of his cross and glory, has saved people from sin and death. We will all die but those who believe in Christ will not die forever but there in heaven will sing the song of the victory of immortality ... in comparison to this all the struggles for earthly liberation are but small skirmishes. The great liberation is that of Christ and those who incorporate the struggle for the liberation of people into their faith in Christ ... these individuals are guaranteed an integral, complete and immortal liberation. Those who separate themselves from this Christian liberation and only struggle for temporal realities, for better wages, for lower prices, for a change of government, for a change of structures that tomorrow will be old structures ... all of this is temporal and transitory. What remains in the soul with all of this is the knowledge that one has worked but one has not worked with a Christian spirit.

Therefore I say to those who are members of organized groups or political parties, if you are Christian then do not forget to live in a profound way this spirituality of poverty. Live intensely this Christian commitment to those who are poor! Thanks to God, there are many people who are doing



this and are members of the ecclesial base communities. But it is a shame that many others have lost their faith and, as a consequence, have mutilated that which is primary. But those who are members of popular political organizations and do not betray their faith, those who participate in the Christian community in order to nourish their struggle with faith and confront their political criteria with faith, these individuals are on the right path.

This is what I wanted to say in my Fourth Pastoral Letter when I said that today one of the most urgent needs of the pastoral ministry of the Archdiocese is a pastoral of accompaniment<sup>6</sup>, that is, walking with young people, with the women and men who are members of political groups so that they can mature in the faith and from the perspective of the faith live out their political commitment without betraying their faith, but rather by walking with these people they will realize that their faith has a political dimension but also realize that their faith is primarily rooted in the eternal resurrection of the Lord and in the redemption of the human person from sin. Hopefully you will not look down upon the Church when, from the perspective of faith, she speaks out against your imperfections, your abuses, your strategies, and the limitations of your political groups. Do not take this in a bad way. Listen to the Church as though you are listening to your mother or listening to a teacher of faith ... listen in this way if you truly want to give honor to your name as Christian. Live out the meaning of this name Christian but it is useless to call yourself a Christian if you do not know and live all that is implied in this name.\*

### **Life of the Church**

We desire to create a Church like that which Jesus presented to us today, a Church of the poor. But here we are not talking about a social class because all those who wish to be saved are saved by the poor. My sisters and brothers, let us attempt to make our Archdiocese such a Church. The information that I now share with you will help us to do precisely that.

The announcement that I made at the beginning concerning Lent I want to repeat here as an invitation so that all of us will gather together on Ash Wednesday at 7:00pm to begin the solemn season of Lent. Since many of you who live in the different villages are listening to me I also want to restate the announcement that Father Fabián Amaya made on Friday: so that all people are able to receive the ashes we have authorized people in charge of those communities where there is no priest to come to the parish church or center and receive the blessed ashes. Then you (layman or laywoman or Sister) can bring these ashes to your community and celebrate with the people this feast of the ashes, this feast which is a call to conversion. In the Chancery we will have mimeographed copies of the outline of this celebration. All of those who want this outline can come to the Chancery and there you will receive information concerning what you can do during this celebration.

If you cannot obtain this information, then read a passage of the Bible and explain what the imposition of ashes means, explain the meaning of Lent and draw near humbly and enter Lent as you listen to the words of Jesus who tells us that God's kingdom is near and therefore we should be converted to believe in the gospel. (36) So that everyone might participate in some way in this celebration I want to let you know that if you are unable to participate in the ceremony in your village, then the head of the household can take a bit of the ashes and celebrate with his/her family the beginning of Lent and there impose the holy ashes like a true priest of the family. It is not a sacrament, just a simple rite to recall that we are dust and into dust we shall return. What is most important, however, is to be converted to the Lord. We want this to be a beautiful rite that can be celebrated everywhere and so we ask everyone to cooperate in this solemn celebration of Ash

Wednesday so that all might enter into the spirit of this season, a season of conversion, prayer, fasting and penance.

With regard to fasting: officially this means that we will eat one principal meal a day. Those who are accustomed to eat their principal meal at lunchtime should then eat smaller quantities of food at breakfast and dinner, thus allowing your stomach to feel a little bit of pain. Those who eat their principal meal at dinner should also eat less food at breakfast and lunch. There are two official fast days: Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Everyone between the ages of 14-60 is obliged to fast. Abstinence consists in not eating meat. One might ask what is more effective, eating meat or not eating meat? Here, however, the question is not simply one of eating or not eating meat but rather we must look at the meaning of this action. Fasting is a way to dominate the will and thus we are showing God that we are willing to deprive ourselves of something in order to make amends for our excessive ways and the abuse of our freedom. This is the meaning of penance. Therefore I invite you to live this season of Lent in a way that we do not put the emphasis on eating or not eating meat but rather that we focus on the idea of mortification and sharing the little that we have with those who have less than we. Let us live with this sense of participation and love and charity. Above all during this time of Lent let us seek ways to become reconciled with our enemies. Let us forgive one another and thus prepare ourselves to rise with Christ on Easter Sunday!

This week in *Orientación* you are able to read a document in which I call upon all people to participate in this season of Lent. Therefore I want to share with you now the goals of Lent. The first goal is the celebration of Easter which will occur on Saturday evening, April 5<sup>th</sup> and Sunday, April 6<sup>th</sup>. The Easter Vigil, which we celebrate on Holy Saturday, is the most solemn celebration of the Liturgical Year. I call upon all young women and men to prepare themselves to celebrate Easter in a way in which you are able to express the fact that Jesus lives. Indeed, through the witness of the young the world becomes filled with a sense of hope. The other goal of Lent occurs fifty days after Easter, the feast of the Resurrection, and here I am speaking about the celebration of Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit. In our diocese we will celebrate this feast by conferring the sacrament of Confirmation on groups of young women and men. Therefore, I ask you, young men and women, to prepare yourselves so that on Pentecost you might become the new apostles who will receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that was obtained for us by Jesus' death ... obtained for us and thus the world can now be clothed in holiness and hope. Confirmation is a very rich sacrament especially when we celebrate this sacrament on Pentecost. This year I hope we will be able to make our celebration of Pentecost a true renewal of the face of the Archdiocese. I ask the beloved pastors, Sisters and catechists to help us prepare young men and women, those who have not been confirmed, so that they might become a sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit of God. We will celebrate this feast on May 25<sup>th</sup>.

The Daughters of Charity celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Virgin's appearance to Catherine Laboure. The Daughters of Casa San Vicente in Santa Tecla invite everyone to participate in the beautiful program that they are preparing to commemorate this event.

The feast of Our Lady of Lourdes will be celebrated in the parish of Colón which has a village under the patronage of the Virgin of Lourdes. When the community celebrates and gathers together it is beautiful to see the children come to the altar and greet the priest with the sign of peace. I felt as though these children were angels on this earth who bring us peace ... peace that our nation so urgently needs. Something else that is very common in this village was seen in the example of Don Hidalgo (I do not remember his last name). He invited the community to come to his house in order to pray the rosary. This man is an invalid and confined to a wheelchair but still very active in his community.

Yesterday the image of the archangel Raphael was enthroned in the village of San Rafael, Cuscatlán.

Yesterday a new community of Carmelite Sisters came into existence in Guazapa. Here we have a group of women who share their lives with the people. Though not a religious congregation, they incarnate themselves in the people and have awakened many people to consider a religious vocation. We see many young people who desire to consecrate themselves to God and who previously found no way to do this ... we now find these people coming forth. We pray that the Holy Spirit will continue to enlighten these young people so that more young men and women will come forward and be willing to live the holiness of the evangelical counsels.

The parish church in Guazapa is being enlarged and I have been asked to extend the following invitation which I am most happy to do. The people in Guazapa and the surrounding villages are asked to collaborate with the committee that desires to give a sign to the people, namely, that the people have a place where they can come together.

This evening we will install Father Luis Recinos as the new pastor in the village of Santa Lucía. He is a young priest from Nicaragua who has come to El Salvador to continue his studies and at the same time has offered us his pastoral services. We express our gratitude to him.

The Emergency Committee of the Archdiocese has been created. This committee, together with Cáritas and the Ecumenical Committee of Humanitarian Aid, desires to help the diocese with its many needs. When I entered the church this morning I received a letter from someone who asked me if the formation of this committee meant that we were preparing for an emergency that would result from a civil war. I want to tell all of you that we do not want to alarm anyone. We are actually preparing for unexpected events that could happen here in the archdiocese and so we are not contemplating a civil war. But then, what is a civil war if at the present time we live in a situation in which people on one side are killing people on the other opposite side? No, the formation of this committee is not meant to alarm anyone. Something could happen like a civil war but it is not for this reason that we have organized this committee. The idea for this committee arose as a result of the massacre of January 22<sup>nd</sup> when we were rushing about to provide lodging for people in our churches. The Church must always be hospitable and willing to assist people.\*

It is sad to see how people inside the Cathedral are being judged by people outside the Cathedral. Yes, this is certainly inconvenient but when one considers the fact that so many poor people have been forced to flee their villages and are unable to return there because of persecution, when we consider the fact that those who are unable to find refuge in our churches are hiding in the mountain areas, then you can understand why the Church must always live in a state of emergency.

Excuse me for not having done this sooner but I want to thank you for the many expressions of congratulations that I received on the occasion of being honored by the University of Louvain. I felt most honored to have received a telegram from a member of the government Junta, Dr. Avalos, and want to most cordially express my gratitude to him for his expression of solidarity. His telegram read: *I extend to you sincerest congratulations as you receive such a great honor from the Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium. I take this opportunity to once again let you know that I hold you in great esteem. Dr. José Ramón Avalos Navarrete.\**

In a special way I want to thank the National Human Rights Commission, the MNR, (National Revolutionary Movement) and the Central Union of Salvadoran Workers for having publicly

manifested their solidarity to me on this occasion. I also thank all those who have been so kind to me and to those who have prayed for me. May God reward you.\*

### Events of the week

From the perspective of the Church that ought to be light to the world, let us look at the world that surrounds us and attempt to illuminate it with faith. When I spoke at Louvain about the political dimension of the faith, I concluded by stating that it is the world of the poor that marks the boundaries of the political dimension of faith. In the different social-economic-political plans our greatest concern is the people who are poor.\* I did not want to go into detail about the different fluctuations in our country, but rather I preferred to explain to them the profound roots of the Church's activity in the explosive social-political situation of El Salvador. I said that *it is the faith that provides the first impulse to incarnate oneself in the socio-political world of the poor, and gives encouragement to actions that lead to liberation and are also socio-political*<sup>7</sup>. In other words I spoke about the Church in the same way that I have done here during this homily, that is, I have spoken of the Church as one that supports all that is of benefit to those who are poor.\* In the same way then the Church denounces all that which is harmful to people.

With these criteria we are going to judge some of the events that occurred during the past week. The famous decree 114 has been promulgated and there has been much discussion about this matter.<sup>8</sup> The Church is not concerned about legalities which often are a cover for selfishness. The Church is, however, concerned about seeing whether this decree is truly a step forward toward the transformations that people who are poor need or whether this decree is ineffective. If this decree moves us toward something that is good for the poor, then the Church is in agreement. If this decree has no meaning for the poor, then the Church is not interested in this matter.

Unfortunately, despite this new path of openness, promises continue to be made but action is still lacking. What has become more evident this week is that neither the Junta nor the Christian Democrats are governing the country\*. They are only allowing that impression to be given nationally and internationally. The February 12<sup>th</sup> massacre of the students who were members of the Salvadoran Students' Revolutionary Movement and the bloody eviction of the occupants from the Christian Democrats' headquarters<sup>9</sup> show clearly that it is not they who govern, but rather the most repressive sector of the armed forces and the security forces\*. The very leaders of the Christian Democrats recognized that these actions ought to be seen as acts of disobedience and are opposed to the position adopted by the Junta through Colonel Majano when he assured us of the non-intervention of the security forces. The security forces were in no way concerned about the fact that the daughter of one of the members of the Junta and the wife of the Minister of Education were participating in this demonstration, and they were even less concerned about respecting the life of the people who occupied the headquarters of the Christian Democrats.\* They assassinated them: they assassinated various people in a brutal manner. It is horrible to listen to the eyewitness accounts that have been shared with us.

If the Junta and the Christian Democrats do not want to be seen as accomplices of so much abuse of power and accomplices of so many criminal acts, then they ought to single out and punish those responsible for these actions. It is not enough to say that these actions will be thoroughly investigated. There are worthy and credible eyewitnesses whose testimony should enable these investigations to be completed in a timely manner.

Also the families of those who were assassinated should receive compensation from the security forces. People lose hope that those responsible for the repression during previous regimes will be

punished when they see that the present members of the armed forces and security forces continue, like previous members, to stain their hands with blood as a result of an even more severe repression of the people\*.

As a result of all of this it has been shown that the present government lacks popular support and is backed only by the armed forces and some foreign powers. Thus the Christian Democrats have another serious responsibility because their presence in the government, as well as the presence of some individual political and economic interests, is moving countries like Venezuela and the United States to support an alternative that is said to be anti-oligarchy when in fact it is anti-popular.\* Moved by this concern I have written a letter to President Carter and I am going to send him this letter after you give me your opinion of it.

*“Dear Mr. President: In the last few days, a bit of news appeared in the national press which has disturbed me very much. According to the story, your government is studying the possibility of supporting the junta of our government with military and economic aid.*

*Because you are a Christian and because you have demonstrated you want to defend the rights of all humans, I want to explain how I, as pastor, see this news and to give you a concrete recommendation.*

*The information that the United States government is studying the way in which to build up the armaments of El Salvador greatly disturbs me. Reportedly, you plan to send military equipment and consultants to “train thee Salvadoran battalions in logistics, communications and intelligence.”<sup>10</sup> If in fact this information is correct, the contribution of your government will do nothing to support greater justice and peace in El Salvador. Without doubt, it will intensify injustice and the repression of the organized people who so many times have fought for their fundamental human rights.\**

*Unfortunately, the junta and above all the armed forces and the security corps have not shown their capacity to resolve, through practical and institutional politics, our grave national problems. Generally they have simply turned to repressive violence, producing a number of dead and wounded much greater than those of the previous military regimes\* whose systematic violation of human rights was denounced by the Interamerican Commission on Human Rights itself.*

*The brutal manner of their actions was exemplified when the security corps recently evacuated and assassinated the occupants of the Christian Democratic headquarters in spite of the fact that neither the junta nor the party, it seems, authorized the operation. This is evidence that the junta and the Christian Democrats do not govern the country. Rather, political power is in the hands of unscrupulous military men who only know how to repress the people and favour the interests of the Salvadorean oligarchy\*.*

*If it is true that last November “a group of six Americans was in El Salvador distributing \$200,000 worth of gas masks and bulletproof vests and giving instructions on the use of these against demonstrators,”<sup>11</sup> you yourself must know that from that moment the security corps, with greater personal protection and efficiency, has repressed the people even more violently by using deadly weapons\*.*

*As a Salvadoran and as the archbishop of the Archdiocese of San Salvador, I have the obligation to see to it that faith and justice reign in my country. Therefore, if you truly want to defend human rights, I ask you:*

- *to prohibit the sending of military aid to the Salvadoran government;*
- *to guarantee that your government will not intervene directly or indirectly, with military, economic, diplomatic, or other pressures to try to determine the destiny of the Salvadoran nation.\**

*At this time we are living through a grave economic-political crisis in our country. However, without question, moment by moment our nation is being conscientized and organized. Through this process, our people have begun to make themselves capable of managing and taking responsibility for El Salvador's future. They are the only ones capable of overcoming this crisis.\**

*It would be a deplorable injustice if, through the introduction of foreign weapons and force, the development of the Salvadorean nation was frustrated. Foreign intervention would suppress and impede the autonomous decision-making process that our country should follow, a process already begun along appropriate economic and political lines.*

*It would be a violation of a right which the Latin American bishops recognized publicly while in Puebla when we called for "the legitimate self-determination of our nations: that they be allowed to organize themselves according to their own genius and historicity and to cooperate in a new international order" (37).\**

*I hope that your religious feelings and your sensitivity to the defense of human rights will move you to accept my request, thus avoiding more bloodshed in this suffering country".\**

I ask the Christian Democrats to analyze not only their intentions, which no doubt may be very good, but also to analyze the real effects that their presence is occasioning. It is a cover up, especially on the international level, of the present government's repressive character. It is urgent, that as a political force of our people, they see from what point it is most effective to use that force on behalf of the poor --- whether isolated and impotent in a government dominated by a repressive military or as one more force incorporated into a broad-based design for a popular government, whose foundation would not be the present armed forces, constantly more corrupt, but rather the agreement of the majority of the people.\*

I am not against the institution of the Armed Forces. I continue to believe that there are honest elements among the Armed Forces and these individuals are the hope of their own vindication. I also believe that there are some members of the security forces who truly provide security to our people. Nevertheless, I cannot be in agreement with those members of the military who abuse their rank and as a result cause us to have less esteem for these necessary institutions that they have converted into instruments of repression and injustice.

The impression is given that the right is governing\*. This impression will continue as long as the government does not single out and sanction those responsible for so much repression. The government will be unable to carry out the proposed reforms that favor those people who are poor because the oligarchy is taking advantage of the political weakness of the government. Through military force they attack and impede the government from carrying out these reforms. We continue to hear rumors of an agreement between the security forces and clandestine armed groups of the right. The suffering of people continues to grow and is becoming impossible to bear.

As an example of all of this I simply want to refer to my beloved priests as I speak about the violent acts that are being carried out by elements of the right. Just as fertilizer and manure make

the garden more beautiful so too the slander that has occurred during these days makes the holiness of our apostles shine forth more brightly in the exercise of their pastoral ministry. Here we have some beautiful letters from the priests who repudiate the slander and make the authors of these slanders responsible for any events that might occur. They once again ratify their commitment to the people because they are not committed to anyone else but Christ and the people who reflect the holiness of Christ, our Lord\*.

Though it would be impossible to read all these letters here, we have received information about the manner in which the Jesuit house was machine-gunned. *On Saturday, February 16<sup>th</sup> at 12:45am, gun fire from machine guns and G-3's was heard. Bullet marks were found on the exterior doors of the house, the interior of two floors of the house and a car. After the shots were fired a car drove off at full speed.* The Jesuits live in this residence and have been persecuted during the past few years. We remember at this time the assassination of Father Grande and other similar actions that show that their form of priestly ministry is hated by certain elements and these elements have persecuted the Jesuits because of what we have spoken about at this time, persecuted because of their commitment to the people.\*

Fifty-two Jesuit have been threatened in Guatemala. This comes as a reaction against the documents that the Jesuits in Central America wrote ... documents in which they denounced systematic abuse of power, economic injustice, the increased indiscriminate violence and the grave violation of the human rights of the indigenous population in Guatemala.<sup>12</sup>

Our magazine, *Búsqueda*, (I highly recommend this publication) has an article on Father Rafael Palacios who was assassinated last year on June 20<sup>th</sup> and on Father José Alirio Napoleón Macías who was assassinated on August 4<sup>th</sup>. This article brings together documents, writings and testimonies that demonstrate that these priests were not trying to implant communism among the people but were true messengers of the gospel of Jesus Christ.\*

I received a very sad letter from Juan Alcides Guardado who was planning to travel to his house in the small hamlet of El Picacho, in the village of Laguna de Las Vueltas, Chalatenango. When he was about to leave, people told him not to travel because it was a hopeless situation. He has been unable to find his mother. He asked me to mention her name on our radio so that he can find out where she is and then travel there to meet her. What absurd things occur in our country! Many people from that area have sought refuge in the Cathedral and there are many people who are fleeing from this current wave of terrorism.

A letter from Señora María Ignacia Rivera of San Agustín in Usulután laments the assassination of her son Manuel de Jesús. He leaves his wife a widow with six small children.

Professor Agustín Osmín Hernández was arrested by five security agents on February 12<sup>th</sup> at 11:30am in Aguilares. His wife and the community of Zacamil are concerned about him. Hopefully this news will accelerate his release or at least move those who have arrested him to bring him before the courts. This is only just.

People have expressed their solidarity with Professor Guillermo Galván whose house was machine-gunned.

Dr. Roberto Lara Velado has received death threats. Those who are aware of the honorable work that he has done should express their solidarity with him and denounce the death threats against this honorable and Christian man.

Many people have spoken about rumors of a military coup from the right. People also speak about a lengthy general strike of the private business sector. It would be unforgivable to make light of the aspirations of our people, their aspiration for justice. Those who continue to support the unjust order in which we live have no right to promote an insurrection that results in a coup. Such a victory over people whose awareness has been heightened would result in much bloodshed and would still not be able to suffocate the cries for justice among our people.\* It would be more logical for the members of the powerful oligarchy to reflect with human and Christian serenity (if that is possible) on the call of Jesus that was proclaimed in the gospel: *Woe to you who laugh now, for you will grieve and weep* (38). Repeating the image that I have used before, it would be better to remove the rings from your fingers so that you do not lose your hand. Do not continue to defend that which cannot be defended. Be logical in your human and Christian convictions and allow the people to organize themselves in their search for justice and don't try to defend what is indefensible.\*.

Finally a word to the members of Popular Organizations. YSAX spoke correctly yesterday when they stated: *The Revolutionary Coordinator of the Masses, as an organization that promotes popular unity, has made efforts to consolidate itself and has attempted to enter into dialogue with democratic elements because they realize that without this their national plan is not viable and power would only be achieved at a great cost (in fact, without these elements, it might even be impossible). As higher authorities in your organization act rationally and move in the direction of achieving certain goals, people who are under your command often destroy all of these accomplishments through irrational combative actions.* I want to say that we defend the right of people to organize and we esteem your effort for unity and openness, but we repudiate the tactics of certain grassroots groups who appear to act without consulting with their leaders. We also repudiate those groups that appear to be led in a bad manner.

You cannot obtain credibility among those who believe in reason and justice by resorting to irrational actions or unnecessary violence. Agitation for the sake of agitation leads no where. The process of unity cannot be advanced through the use of force.

I want to remind you about a moral Christian principle: the desire to obtain consent or enter into a contract by the use of pressure actually diminishes the free will of the consenting party and therefore there is no obligation to carry out that which one has agreed to do under pressure. Dialogue is much more productive especially if our popular organizations are maturing. Through dialogue the popular organizations demonstrate their maturity: foolish actions accomplish nothing.

I reiterate my disapproval of the strategy of occupying buildings. This causes many inconveniences and I have witnessed the suffering of many hostages and their families, especially when some of these hostages are ill and need to be cared for. What right do you have to deprive another human being of freedom? This is a ridiculous and dangerous attitude especially when two organizations begin to compete with one another. Such a situation occurred in the Cathedral where members of FAPU (Unified Popular Action Front) wanted to remove members of BRP (Popular Revolutionary Bloc) who were occupying the Cathedral. Then members of BRP returned to discuss again the question of who should occupy the Cathedral. During the time that FAPU occupied the church, sacred vessels were abused and albs and other vestments scattered about. The new occupants (members of BRP) had the courtesy to clean these things up.

The occupation of the Salvador Institute of Foreign Trade by the BPR<sup>13</sup> doesn't favour the unity that organizations seek, especially when FENASTRAS had already raised the salaries of the



APLAR workers in the free zone of San Bartolo, and the reopening of the factory as a Salvadorean enterprise was being renegotiated. For this business transaction a trip was being planned to the United States today or tomorrow. Now that transaction cannot be completed because the lawyer Arturo Guzman Trigueros is held hostage and the directors cannot be found to dialogue about this problem. I urge the BPR to reconsider this wrong move and in the name of 600 workers who might lose their jobs to do everything possible so FENASTRAS can continue with plans for the good of these workers.

Similar immaturity was shown by those who took over UCA<sup>14</sup>: there was no possibility of dialoguing with the responsible people. That is why the Rector could say: "What more can I say when I have already been dialoguing with these people for 22 hours?"

In the name of the religious sentiments of my people, for the good of the poor and of my people, I beg the directors of the organizations that today are occupying church buildings to come by to dialogue with me or with those responsible for the buildings. We hope to reopen them for the people's worship during Lent, which is drawing near. These buildings are temples of prayer for our people, whose Christian sentiments deserve at least as much consideration as the objectives of those occupying the buildings. The need to negotiate is urgent. If the security forces would keep their distance from the churches, it would be easier for the churches to offer refuge to the people of the city. Remember, it has always been the church's mission to offer itself in every type of charity, not only in the church itself but in all its institutions. That is why I say there is a need for dialogue. Don't think you have discovered something new when already the church is old in doing deeds of mercy and hospitality.\*

I also issue to the popular military organizations a call to return to the respectable paths of rationality, of human dignity. I am referring to the abductions, threats and exacting of vengeance. No one can render justice by their own hands; instead, they must appeal to the tribunals of justice. I am making many requests to those who are in a position to do something about lives that are in danger. Past crimes or sins do not matter when one speaks about the dignity of people. The Pope has also said that violence cannot be inflicted, not even on those whom someone judges blameworthy, because it ends as vengeance.

Mr. Rodolfo Useda Franco from Ilobasco has asked me to intervene for him because he was charged with helping attack the church in Los Desamparados and has received threatening phone calls. He denies that participation.

Also many neighbours from the canton La Loma de San Pedro, Perulapan, proclaim their innocence; they were accused over the radio of having committed offences and having killed and buried people. They say these charges are false.

Concerning the abduction of Mr Dunn: a letter from Argentina arrived in which the writer offered himself as hostage in Mr Dunn's place. All this would be unnecessary if the protagonists in these actions had human feelings. The fight for the people should ennoble every effort; it loses its virtue when it tramples over persons.

We conclude in the same way that we began. Yes, we conclude by saying that in people who are poor and in people who suffer ... in these people there is great hope. It is for this reason that the Church, in the name of Jesus Christ, wants to root out anything vile from among our people. I want you to see that my denunciations have only one purpose: we want to be a holy people; we want a government that truly understands people who are poor; we want a political system that acts

on behalf of the well being of our people and those who are poor. In this way we can repeat with Jesus: *Blessed are you who are poor, for the kingdom of God is yours* (39).\*

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<sup>1</sup> *La dimension política de la fe desde la opción por los pobres*. Discourse of Mons. Romero on receiving the Doctorate *honoris causa* from the University of Louvain (2 February 1980), *Orientación*, 17 & 24 February 1980.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> “Vos sos el Dios de los pobres”, Entrance hymn of the *Misa campesina nicaraguense*, of Carlos Mejía Godoy, 1975.

<sup>6</sup> *Misión de la Iglesia en medio de la crisis del país* (6 August 1979), 92-94.

<sup>7</sup> *La dimension política de la fe desde la opción por los pobres*, see above.

<sup>8</sup> Decree 114 concerned a reform of the current Constitution (1969) which would permit the Juntab Revolucionario de Gobierno to carry out the agrarian reform and nationalize the bank and foreign trade. See *El Mundo*, 11 & 12 February 1980.

<sup>9</sup> The Comité de Derechos Humanos de El Salvador denounced that, on 12 February, 17 people were killed during the repressive intervention of the national security forces against a student manifestation of MERS and in removing militants of the LP-28 who had occupied the headquarters of the PDC in San Salvador. See *El Mundo*, 15 February 1980.

<sup>10</sup> “Ayuda militar a El Salvador estudia Estados Unidos”, *El Diario de Hoy*, 15 February 1980.

<sup>11</sup> “Ayuda military a El Salvador...”, see above.

<sup>12</sup> See “Ante el dolor y la esperanza del pueblo de Guatemala”, *ECA* 375-376 (1980), pp. 139-141.

<sup>13</sup> See *El Independiente*, 16 February 1980.

<sup>14</sup> The administrative offices of the UCA were occupied by students organized in the FUR-30. See *El Mundo*, 16 February 1980.

*Marginal References* (1) Ps 127,1; (2) M 1,3; (3) P 1129; (4) P 1132; (5) M 14,4; (6) M 14,4a; (7) Lk 6,12; (8) Lk 6,20b; (9) Lk 6,24-25; (10) Is 5,8; (11) Mk 1,15; (12) Lk 6,20b; (13) Am 8,6; (14) Am 3,10; (15) Am 8,4; (16) Am 6,3b-4; (17) Is 5,8; (18) P 1147; (19) M 14,4b; (20) Lk 6,20b; (21) Gn 12,2; (22) Gn 12,7; (23) Lk 6,20b; (24) Mt 5,3; (25) Lk 1,53; (26) Lk 1,52; (27) Mk 12,17; (28) Jr 17,5-6; (29) Jr 17,7-8; (30) 1Cor 15,6-9; (31) 1Cor 15,20; (32) M 14,4c; (33) 2Cor 8,9; (34) Lk 6,22-23; (35) Lk 6,26; (36) Mk 1,15; (37) P 305; (38) Lk 6,25b; (39) Lk 2,20b.