

# NO TO VIOLENCE

**Funeral Service for Raúl Molina Cañas<sup>1</sup>  
November 14, 1977**

Dear family members in mourning and my beloved sisters and brothers.

Once again the Church fulfills her obligation as mother ... the Church gathers up another victim of violence and with this victim in her arms she cries out *NO* to violence and she shares a word of comfort with those who weep over this new abuse of life.

The Cathedral becomes once again a sign of this mother Church who offers a word of love and comfort to those who have been orphaned and to those who weep over the separation that death causes. This word that she offers is not merely some human word. But rather is the word of the One who created all things. It is the Eternal Word who today repeats the words that were uttered from the cross to the one who asked for a favor: *Today you shall be with me in Paradise* (a). In Jesus' eyes it does not matter who returns to him and asks for forgiveness. What is important is the sincere desire to repent and believe in him. Before the grandeur of God how small human greatness appears.

This Cathedral, unfortunately, is accustomed to gather up the victims of bloodshed and abuse and sees the smallness of the human person enclosed within the four walls of a coffin. But no matter who is in the coffin, the Church, with great faith, looks toward eternity and accompanies her children on this journey to eternity. From that door of heaven that marks the boundary between heaven and earth, the Church that continues her pilgrimage on earth glances toward the earth which she has just left and communicates this message of God to those who continue the journey of life: *Dear pilgrims, here at the door of eternity, all of us come to bid farewell to this beloved friend and brother.* The gestures of farewell continue while the deceased enters the world beyond this mortal life. And the prayers of the People of God, the prayers of the Pilgrim People can be nothing else for before the Lord there are no rights but only humble supplication. From the perspective of the humility of the coffin, we reflect on our own smallness. How small is the human person and yet how great when they find their support in the mercy of God, when they are able to say: *Lord, have mercy!* This prayer of supplication is made in light of something great because this human being, no matter how many sins and offenses, this person whose life has just ended can find a place in heaven. Without a doubt, the Father who sent his Son so that people might not be condemned but saved, this Father opens his arms of goodness to the one whom the People of God are commending to his mercy.

The scene this afternoon is most beautiful. We do not fit inside this Cathedral and we have had to improvise an altar here in front of the park, in the midst of a large multitude, and we stand before the body of a man who was assassinated, a man whose most fundamental right was abused --- his right to life. Thus the voice of this people that has gathered together raises up its voice to say: *Lord, our presence here is primarily a religious presence. Our presence represents our prayers for the soul of our brother, who until yesterday was our companion on this journey of life. Today he needs your mercy and we, this people gathered before you, implore you to give him eternal rest and perpetual light. May floods of comfort flow from your throne of mercy to those who have now been orphaned by the death of this our*

*brother, to all the members of his family, to all those who shared his ideals, to his companion in work, to all his friends and to all those who now fill this plaza.*

### **Through one man's sin death entered the world**

My sisters and brothers, now after the Church has prayed for the deceased, she turns her glance toward the pilgrims who have come to the doors of eternity and speaks to them, in the words of Saint Paul, about the two great rivers from which is derived all that is good and all that is evil. We have just listened to the words of Saint Paul that express this theology: *through one man's sin death entered into the world* (b), and with death we discover that there are many ways in which our beloved come face to face with this reality. Natural death is painful in itself but even more painful is death when one dies as the victim of violence. Violence is the fruit of criminal activity. No matter who inflicts violence, violence that kills another is always a sin and such violence has nothing to do with God. Violence is the result of sin and sin entered the world through Adam and now all his descendents, including ourselves, carry evil instincts within our hearts. Ay, those who do not repress and control these instincts on time!

My sisters and brothers of El Salvador, what will become of us during this time when people act on these instincts of assassination and crime! A wave is rising up in our midst and no social class of people can feel secure. It is possible that anyone of us can be walking and have wonderful ideals for life and work and then suddenly be riddled with bullets. This is a possibility for anyone of us because the wave of evil has grown. No one has sown this violence. Through the first act of disobedience sin entered the world. As persons we are able to analyze these evil instincts and we see that they are always evil, no matter what might motivate this violence, it is still evil.

### **Through Christ's holiness salvation entered the world**

My sisters and brothers, at the same time Saint Paul presents us with the positive side of life: just as *through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin* (c) --- assassinations, violence and every form of criminal activity --- yet through the obedience of the Redeemer, through the holiness of Christ, the Son of God, redemption and life have entered the world. (d) This tragic event in our history calls us now to undertake this task. No more crimes! No more violence!

Sisters and brothers --- if we really are sisters and brothers --- then let us build together in love and peace. Here we are not talking about a peace and love that is superficial or some sentimental feeling, some mere appearance, rather we are talking about a love and peace that is rooted in justice. Without justice there can be no true love; without justice there can be no true peace. If we want to follow the path of goodness then we must enter into solidarity with Christ and we must try to uproot from our hearts all those evil instincts that lead us to violence and crime. We must also enter into solidarity with those who share these same ideals concerning life and love and peace --- all of which are rooted in justice.

Thus, my sisters and brothers, in this doorway of eternity, as we gaze from this privileged position, we see our brother who has left us and we bid him farewell. May he return to this Church and bring with him the voice of Christ that proclaims: *My brothers and sisters, let there be no more victims of violence. Let me be the last one to shed my blood on the streets. May this be a lesson for everyone ... and finally love one another.*(e)

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<sup>1</sup> Raúl Molina Cañas, President of the Pan Lido firm, was assassinated 12 November 1977 while resisting an attempt to kidnap him.

*Margin References* (a) Lk 23,43: (b) Rm 5,17a: (c) Rm 5,12: (d) Rm 5,17b: (e) Jn 15,12.