

HOLY MARY, MOTHER OF GOD

January 1, 1978

Numbers 6:22-27

Galatians 4:4-7

Luke 2:16-21

.... Listeners on the radio¹, the Biblical greeting that God spoke to the people whom he led are spoken today to us, the Christian community, the spiritual Israel, the People of God. This greeting is an expression of best wishes for the New Year: *The Lord bless you and keep you! The Lord let his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you! The Lord look upon you kindly and give you peace!* (a). No more appropriate or gracious greeting could be extended to us at the beginning of this New Year than those words that are placed before us this morning for our consideration. At the same time, the words of this greeting unite the good will of God to the presence of Mary, the Virgin Mother.

The Church celebrates an official feast in honor of Mary and that feast is celebrated today, January 1st. Eight days after Mary gave birth to the Redeemer of the world, the Church wants to remind all her children to celebrate the solemnity of Holy Mary, Mother of God. The year begins, then, with this direct blessing of God. Furthermore, under the title of Mary, Mother of God, we are inspired to place our trust in the power of the Virgin, since this power comes from God.

This celebration occurs at a time when we are able to share the thinking of the Archdiocese with all of those gathered here in the Cathedral, as well as the many communities that are listening to us on the radio. It is an opportunity to share our thinking with many families in the Archdiocese and enables all of us to feel that the Church is our house and that here, in the Church, there is a very gentle and kind Mother, one who is gentler and kinder than our earthly mothers, a Mother who wants no evil to befall us. Mary radiates all this tenderness of the home and thus the Church, the Archdiocese and all the communities ought to feel her presence.

Events of the past week

I feel as though we, the children of Mary, are gathered around our Mother to speak briefly about these days of Christmas and the New Year. It is the same that is occurring in many homes where children gather together with their parents. From this Cathedral, I ask my Mother, the Virgin Mary, to continue to bless the efforts of this individual who tries to be the servant of the Diocese and who also attempts to be the voice of the voiceless. May this service be pleasing to the Blessed Mother. Indeed, it must be painful for our Mother to see her children suffer, and yet so often be unable to reveal and speak openly about these sufferings. For example: I received a letter from the people of Las Tres Ceibas which refutes the official report that was published concerning the disorders that arose in this community on the night of December 24th and the afternoon of December 26th. They wrote: *It was not the*

Christians who provoked this exchange of gun shots but rather some drunken members of ORDEN² (Nationalist Democratic Organization). It would be good to investigate these matters before blaming others for such serious offenses.³ In this way those who are truly responsible can be held accountable.

We have also received complaints from Aguilares that the house where the Sisters live, the parish convent, was invaded by people in authority who gained access to this house by climbing over the garden wall of the neighboring house.

We continue to receive many complains about people who have been captured but never brought before the courts and who are now among the “disappeared”. We have also been made aware of many injustices that are taking place in factories and on farms in matters that deal with bonuses, salaries, loans, etc. My sisters and brothers, I simply want to be a voice that in the name of the God who loves us all invites people to live with a sense of equity and justice and asks those in authority to fulfill the law.

The Church that is gathered together as a family is saddened by the mystery of the bomb that destroyed the well known grocery store⁴ as well as the mystery that surrounds the abduction of Mr. Safie and Mrs. De Ciurato.⁵ Hopefully this New Year will bring about true freedom and give an aspect of greater tranquility and peace to all those realities that have caused us sadness during the past year.

Life of the Church

In this gathering to celebrate the feast of Mary, the Mother of God, we are also happy that today, at the request of the Holy Father, we also celebrate the World Day for Peace. But since today, January 1st, is not the most convenient day to reflect on this reality and on this call that is extended to all people of good will, the Commission for Justice and Peace has organized three days of reflection, January 4th, 5th and 6th. The Archbishop of Panama, Marcos McGrath, will participate in these reflections, along with Dr. Martínez Moreno. These gatherings will be held here in the Cathedral at 7:00pm on January 4th, 5th, and 6th.

On January 4th at 4:00pm, Archbishop McGrath will offer to the priests, religious and laity, who have different pastoral concerns, information about the preparations that are being made for the Third General Meeting of the Latin American Bishops that will take place in Puebla de los Angeles during the month of October of this year that has just begun. It is good that all the priests come together --- they have already been informed about this meeting --- and now I simply renew that invitation to come to the seminary at 4:00pm on January 4th. I also invite the Sisters and all those persons who are interested in the work of the Bishops in Latin America to participate in this meeting. Archbishop McGrath is the representative of the Central American Zone.

I also want to inform you that I received a letter from the Archbishop of Tegucigalpa and he has asked me to communicate to you his greetings and best wishes. He was invited to participate in the reflections that surround our celebration of the World Day for Peace, but because of previous engagements, is unable to come. He said, however, that he will be with us in spirit and will continue to pray for peace in our countries.

In this week's *Orientación*⁶ I urge you to read carefully the Pope's address to the ambassador of El Salvador before the Holy See because the biased accounts in the

newspapers don't give an accurate idea of what the Pope is saying to this country. There we can see how the Church here in El Salvador is following the line the Pope suggests, through the address to the ambassador, for our government and people in El Salvador.

In accord with the thinking of the Holy Father and in this environment that cries out for the construction of a more just order here in El Salvador and for the reform of the evident injustices, in this context then I want to communicate to you the news that at this time most of you already have heard. During the past week the newspapers announced the appointment Bishop Revelo as the new Auxiliary Bishop of San Salvador. I have expressed my thinking about Bishop Revelo. He is a true friend even though many people want to distort his thinking. I believe that when the Pope sets forth pastoral lines of action for the process of evangelization in El Salvador and, at the same time, names a bishop, that is to say, names a person who is an expression of his confidence in the preaching that takes place in this country, he does so because he sees the designated bishop as an echo of the authentic doctrine of the Church. Therefore, I ask all of you to lovingly embrace the new Auxiliary Bishop that the Holy Father has designated to help the Archdiocese of San Salvador. I also invite you to keep in mind the Pope's thinking which all bishops and every one who is a teacher in the Church must abide by in order to be a worthy minister of the Church to the People of God to whom he has been sent. In this same sense I spoke to you at the time of Bishop Rivera's appointment to the Diocese of Santiago de María and stated that such a nomination is an expression of the Pope's confidence in those persons who have been designated to fill these positions and therefore provide us with a guarantee that these bishops are truly in accord with the actual doctrine of the Church. In this light we all have an obligation to deepen our knowledge of this Church that is attempting to become more profoundly incarnated in the realities of the people.

This week I visited the communities of San Juan Opico, Antiguo Cuzcatlán and the parish of La Merced in their church of San Esteban. I want to thank the people for the warm reception that I was given and I also want to extend my greetings to the pastors and their communities and thank them for the ecclesial activities that they are so magnificently carrying out in these different areas. I also want to congratulate the various Christian communities that during these days of Christmas have spent much time reflecting on the gospel. It is one of the most beautiful characteristics of our Church: our communities are being oriented by the Bible and by their reflections on the Bible. We see this occurring in the Christian base communities of faith where small groups of faithful men and women are being led by their pastors or by the religious Sisters who have pastoral care of these people. We are witnessing many men and women grow in their faith and in their ability to share reflections on the Bible and their lived experiences. These Christians are coming to a deeper understanding that to be a member of this Church ultimately prolongs the presence of Christ in history.

The non-Catholic and Protestant communities that belong to the Ecumenical Commission have enthusiastically begun preparations for the eight days of prayer that has been celebrated for many years during the month of January from the 18th to the 25th. These days are referred to as the Octave of Prayer for Christian Unity. I am very pleased to know that the Catholic Church, in communion with our Protestant sisters and brothers, is preparing these days of prayer during which we will pray as Jesus prayed at the Last Supper: *Father, may all who believe in me be one. May we never present to the world the scandal of Christian division but may we be true followers of the authentic gospel. May we be one fold, led by the one Shepherd, who is Christ the Lord* (b).

As I do on the first day of each month, so today, on January 1st, I want to invite you to come to the Divina Providencia Hospital. At 5:00pm we will celebrate a Holy Hour in the beautiful chapel that perhaps many of you have not seen. There we will pray together. On the first of each month, together with those people who are ill, we are able to make an act of faith before the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist and offer our prayers for the great needs of our families, our nation, and the Church. At the same time we are able to perform an act of charity --- one that is referred to in the Catechism as an act of mercy --- namely, we are able to visit the sick and participate in a work that is not simply a name but rather a reality --- that is, we are able to participate in this work of Divine Providence. There, in the hospital, the Sisters and the patients depend on this charity and love that is donated to the hospital. They have no subsidies, but rely completely on Providence that is made known to them by generous benefactors.

My sisters and brothers, we could continue to comment on the many other events of the Church that are continually drawing Catholics together in that unity that Christ desires, events that ward off the temptation of disunity that seems to become stronger in our Church. But these brief notes are enough. I want, however, to join to these comments the intimate stories of each one of you who are present here sharing in this reflection: your families and you yourselves. So many problems! So many stories! I want to bring all these stories together and place them in common before us as we reflect on the kindness and the greatness of this Blessed Mother that the Church offers to us today as the focus of our reflection: the Virgin Mother of God.

From today's three readings, I present the following three thoughts that will enable us to focus on the greatness, almost divine, of this "*most blessed woman among all women*"(c). In the first reading, God presents his thinking about the Old Testament, that is, the history of Israel. In the second reading, Saint Paul places before us the arrival of the time when God had to become man and the fact that God needed the collaboration of a woman in order that this God-man might be born. My third thought is based on the gospel: the shepherds found Jesus together with Mary and thus, Mary is the way to Christ.

God presents his thoughts about the Old Testament.

We see in the first lines of the reading from Numbers that was read today God's understanding of the people. The Lord spoke to Moses and told him: *This is how you shall bless the Israelites* (d). What does God think about his people? What do the People of God think about their God? What is Israel in the Bible? What is the Old Testament? The Old Testament is a history of God's love. Through sacred promises, God slowly prepared the people for redemption. Over an extended period of time God prepared the people for the coming of the Son of God who would save the world. In this way humanity became conscious of who this saving God is.

Let us look at the way that God formed a people so that he could come and save the world. The meaning of *people* is most profound and so when we speak of the *people* let us not defile this word. The *people* is that group of men and women who, in history, develop a God-given vocation.

The vocation of Israel was the greatest, for they were chosen from among all other people because their founder, Abraham, had received a promise from God. He was elderly and

sterile but God told him: *Look up at the sky and count the stars, if you can. Just so shall your descendents be* (e). Abraham could have taken these words as a cruel joke --- he was old and had no heirs: *how can I bring into existence a people so numerous* (Genesis 15:3). The Bible says: believe. Abraham believed against all hope and so this people would be established on faith, on the faith of Abraham.(f) God then made the following promise: *through the descendents of Abraham, all the people of the world will be blessed*.

Therefore, when the people hear expressions like the one we heard today, *so shall they invoke my name upon the Israelites, and I will bless them*, they were reminded of the covenant that God had established with them, the promises that God had extended to them. Each time that a foreigner or a fellow citizen blessed Israel, the people remembered: *you are a blessed people; you have a special relationship with God* . When this people was humiliated, God was also humiliated. When this people was victorious in overcoming their difficulties, when they were glorious in those circumstances that they had to confront, God was also glorified. The relationship that existed between God and Israel was similar to the relationship between a husband and wife. The wife takes the name of her husband, the last name of her husband and hands over her destiny to her husband. If the wife is faithful, honorable and glorious, then her husband feels glorified through her. So, too, if the wife defiles, prostitutes and dishonors her husband, then her husband is frightened by her conduct. Thus, Israel is God's spouse. For this reason, the true Israelites, the true descendents of Abraham, had great faith in God.

The Church offers to us today the most beautiful expression of this people: *Mary, a daughter of Abraham, a descendent of Abraham* (cf. Luke 1:27). In her simple, modest and hidden life as a Virgin, she incarnates all the currents of history. Therefore, when with great gratitude she sings her canticle to the Lord for having been chosen to be the mother of the Promised One, she says: *He has helped Israel his servant, remembering his mercy, even as he promised to our fathers, promised to Abraham and his descendents forever* (g). In this act she felt that all of history was becoming incarnate in her. No one has been as nationalistic as Mary. She is a beautiful example! My sisters and brothers, on this day when we celebrate this feast of Mary, the Mother of God, I would like to highlight this characteristic: Mary is a patriot who loved her people, who was alive with her people, knew their traditions and did not betray the traditions of her home land. She truly had the heart of a patriot! What a beautiful sign! At this time in our history as a nation we need men and women with true patriotic spirit, people who will not betray the nation by accommodating the interests, history and redemption of the people to self interest in the area of politics, economics and culture.

The first of January. Salvadorians! The Virgin calls us to be like her: to love our country, to study our history, to know our idiosyncrasies and to be truly Salvadorians. Perhaps we are not all at fault and perhaps we are not totally at fault when we do not deeply love our country as Mary loved her homeland. At times, we see our nation in an ugly light. We feel out of place in our own country and many people prefer to go to other lands. We do not feel at home. We do not feel in our blood our traditions, the beauty of the many scenic places and the grandeur of our land. Yes, El Salvador is beautiful. Mary was alive with the beauty of her homeland and the history of Abraham, Moses, David and the great women of the Old Testament. The whole history of Israel palpitated in the heart of the Virgin patriot. She loved the land of Israel.

My sisters and brothers, let us love our country. Let us love this country as Mary loved her country. Yes, she was aware of Israel's sins and asked God to look with mercy on the

sins of her people. Yet at the same time she loved the greatness of the vocation of the People of God. Therefore, when God chose from this people --- this people of many promises --- a woman to bear in her womb his Son who would become a model for all people of future generations, he chose that woman who could best incarnate the whole spirit of Israel. Mary was chosen for her holiness and patriotism. Mary is the mother of Christ because Christ had to be the child of an entire people and Mary is the expression of all the people. When Mary speaks to the angel and says: *I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you say* (h), it is the whole chosen people of God that is speaking. It was precisely for this moment that God had formed a people that was so wonderfully privileged and blessed.

The miracles and the whole history of the Old Testament had one objective: to create a history of a people that was specially blessed by God so that a Redeemer might be born among this people and become the source of blessings for all other people in the world. Thus Mary, in her vocation as the Mother of God and the Mother of Christ, fulfilled the divine plan of God for the whole people of Israel. Many of her fellow citizens did not understand this plan. Look at how many people strayed and betrayed God's plan for his people. They sold themselves to foreign powers. They bowed down and worshipped the golden calf. They sinned and so offended God that he compared his feelings about the people's sins to the pain that a husband feels when he has been betrayed by his wife.

But a remnant is always found in Israel. There was always a small group of people who remained faithful to God's promises. There was always this remnant, this small group and when the fullness of time arrived this group had become quite small. Look at the period in history when Christ was born. Israel had turned its back on God, but there was always a small group, perhaps unknown, and the soul of the people was present in this remnant: Mary, Joseph, the shepherds who awaited the Redeemer and the apostles who followed Christ. This small group, this nucleus, continued to be blessed by God even when the majority of people had become unworthy of their vocation. My dear people of El Salvador, let us not walk on those same paths. God has a plan of love and salvation for our country and God is offering these gifts to us through his Church. The people of El Salvador who anchor themselves to this Church, love and work with the Church. They are the nucleus, the remnant, the small group of faithful people of Israel today. From this remnant, this Church, God wants to save our people. Let us be the Church. Let us be like Mary and preserve the vocation of our people so that when better days come, God will see that we have been faithful to the vocation that he has given to our land.

Mary, God's instrument that enabled his Son to become incarnate in history

The second thought is taken from the second reading, Saint Paul's letter to the Galatians. He says: *When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of woman* (i). In light of today's celebration, the feast of Mary, the Mother of God, we would qualify this reading and state that Mary is God's instrument that enabled his Son to become incarnate in history. This is Mary's role.

When the time arrived for the people of Israel to offer a woman so that the Son of Man could also be the son of woman, that is, true man, Mary was found to be the appropriate woman because, as the saints have said, Mary incarnated the Son of God in her mind and in faith before incarnating him in the flesh. Only when God felt incarnated in Mary's holiness did he call her to be the Mother of God: *you have been found pleasing in the sight of God. Among the million of women who are in Israel, you are blessed among all women and you*

will be the mother of the Redeemer (j). Mary, wishing to save her virginity, asks for an explanation and Mary begins to understand a little of the mystery that is about to take place: the One whom you will conceive will be Holy --- a work of the Holy Spirit. As God formed this numerous People of God from the sterility of Abraham and Sarah, so without impairing your virginity, you will become the mother of the One who will be the center of the history of Christianity in the world (k). In this way Mary gives us an insight that enables us to understand who Christ is.

In the fourth century, there arose some erroneous doctrines about Christ. It was said that Mary gave birth to a child, a child like any other child whom God later chose to be his Son. Something like that which occurs when we are born of flesh and then afterwards, through Baptism, we become children of God. On numerous occasions, the Church, charged with guarding the revealed truths of God, gathered together in Council. The most famous of these Councils was that of Ephesus. In this Council it was proclaimed that Mary had given birth to God and had conceived him in her womb and therefore she ought to be called the Mother of God. She was not simply the mother of a man who became God but carried this God in her womb. Christ then, has a divine nature because he is God, but also has a human nature because he was formed in the womb of Mary. But this God is one person, a divine person, the Second Person of the Most Blessed Trinity. Thus, the divine nature as God and the human nature as man come together and form one person: God.

We can see that what Christ does as God, God does, because when Christ acts as man, he is united with God and, therefore, we can say that God acts. Thus the Council stated that God became man and from that time forward, human nature has been elevated in the person of Christ.^(l) Christ thinks like a man, but it is God who thinks; he loves with the heart of God, but it is God who loves; he works with human hands, but it is God who works with those hands. Therefore, when Christ dies on the cross, his sacrifice has an infinite value because his sacrifice is not simply that of a human person but of a person who at the same time is God. His pain and his blood are deemed worthy to save all people in the world and to pay the debt of the sins of all people. How great is Christ!

Since the 1960's there has been a renewed interest in theology to study Christology more in depth. There are two currents in these new studies. One is called Christology from above and the other Christology from below. Christology from above approaches this study from the perspective that God became man, while Christology from below approaches this same study from the perspective of the man, who in Christ, becomes God.

This is beautiful! My sisters and brothers, on this feast of Mary, the Mother of God, I pray that she might instill in us the true faith, the same faith that she had when she embraced her son Jesus and the same faith she had when she received the dead body of her son when he was taken down from the cross. This victim that was offered up on the cross, the child of Bethlehem, is God who was conceived as man in Mary's womb. Thus Mary is rightfully given this glorious title: Mother of Christ, that is, Mother of God.

This is the true doctrine about Christ and Mary. For this reason the Church desires that during this Christmas season, today, eight days after Jesus' birth, our reflection should be centered on Mary. We ask Jesus to excuse us for this, but it should also be understood that our reflection on Mary should never separate us from Christ but rather should enable us to become closer to Christ. There is no doubt that a Nativity that did not have a woman as an intermediary, a Nativity without a woman holding her child in her arms, would be a Nativity

of a God who became man, but would be lacking the tenderness of a woman. The same could be said of the scene that occurs at the foot of the cross. Jesus, as victim, offers his life for the sins of the world, but without the arms of a mother to receive his body, this would be a sign of the infinite love of God who offered himself as a sacrifice for all of us, but it would be lacking those characteristics that are so identified with mothers: tenderness, love, compassion. The passion of Christ is more beautiful when we contemplate the Sorrowful Mother. So also the Nativity become more beautiful when we contemplate the Mother of the Child Jesus.

My sisters and brothers, we have great devotion to the Virgin and my friendship with our Protestant sisters and brothers leads to me, at different times, to direct messages to them about the truth and greatness of our Catholic doctrine. Therefore, my dear sisters and brothers of the Protestant faith, we feel this longing within you for a greater love of Mary. Some, because of a certain fanaticism, have even separated Mary from the cult that you render to Christ. Mary takes nothing away from Christ! Rather Mary makes Christ more pleasing, beautiful and attractive. It is like the jeweler who sets a precious stone on a mounting of fine gold, the stone becomes more beautiful because of the gold setting. Christ is a precious pearl and has no comparison. He is the only savior and mediator between God and the human race. Christ has saved us, not Mary. But God chose Mary, so that together with Christ there would exist this mounting of gold. Mary is like that gold setting who presents us to God, to Christ our Lord.

Mary, a sign of Jesus' presence

And so, my sisters and brothers, my third thought is based on the words of Saint Luke that we have heard proclaimed in this morning's gospel: *The shepherds went in haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger* (m). What a beautiful reality! The shepherds found Mary, and through her, found Jesus. This is my third thought: Mary is a sign of Jesus' presence.

When daylight appears, it is a sign that the sun will also soon appear. So too, when we are aware of Mary's presence, it is a sign that Christ is near. It is the reason for her existence. When the moon illuminates our land --- especially at this time when we have discovered that that moon is an immense desert of rock, lifeless rock --- but when the sun illuminates the moon, then this immense rock shines forth like a brilliant light upon the earth. How beautiful is this light! How beautiful is the moon! This is Mary --- by nature, a woman of our race, but when the Divine beauty has taken hold of her, Mary becomes the precious moon who sheds her peaceful, motherly, tender light upon our days and nights.

When we speak of Mary, we always refer to Christ. Mary is a sign of Christ's presence. Therefore, my sisters and brothers, when we say that Mary is the Mother of the Church, we are also saying that the Church and Mary are signs of Christ's presence. If the Church saves, it is because she prolongs the saving mission of Christ. If Mary is the source of inspiration and love in the prayers that we offer in thanksgiving, it is because the power, tenderness and redemption of our Lord, Jesus Christ, shine forth through Mary. Mary is a sign of Christ's presence. Let us not forget this fact. When devotion to Mary begins to die in our hearts, we have reason to be fearful. It is as though the star that led the three Kings to Christ no longer shined brightly --- we become lost. When devotion to Mary suffers an eclipse, then the light of the divine sun, Christ the Lord, is also in a phase of eclipse. But when in the hearts of all

people and families and every Christian, gentleness and confidence and love accompany the prayers that we offer to Mary, then Christ is near and those souls are not lost.

This morning, on this feast of the Virgin when we honor Mary as Mother of God and the Mother of Christ, I want to impress upon everyone who might have given in to these modern styles and perhaps lost some of the devotion that we learned from our mothers with regard to offering prayers to the Virgin Mother, let us take advantage of this opportunity today to recover and renew our hearts in this matter. The human person, no matter how great he/she might become in history, will always have the heart of a child. Before the Mother of God, all people, no matter how great they are, are still children and should not be ashamed of those childish ways when they are with their mother.

In the presence of Mary, who is our Mother, let us renew this simplicity of heart in praying the rosary, in our pilgrimages to Mary's shrines and in our visits before the images of Mary. Let us fall on our knees. Why not! As long as we do not act from a sense of idolatry, but act with the same devotion that is often expressed when we kneel before our mother, who perhaps is seated, and thus on our knees we speak tenderly with our mother. All of these actions are little things. I say little things because our mothers call them "little things": the candy that we offer her or that we bring to her from a party we have just attended. Little things, insignificant, but they contain all the tender love of children. My sisters and brothers, I would like our Archdiocese to acquire anew this devotion that is so traditional and characteristic among our families. In many homes the rosary is no longer prayed and the name of Mary is no longer invoked and, forgive me for saying this to those who are members of the base communities of faith, but in your communities at times it is sad to see how you offer beautiful, spontaneous prayers to God and Christ, but do not mention Mary. Let us renew our awareness of her presence, because her presence is a sign that Christ is with us and near us.

Let us be humble like the shepherds and simple like the three kings who in the presence of Mary felt like children. Let us recognize Mary as the Mother of the Redeemer. Let us take advantage of this feast of Mary's divine maternity to renew our faith and come to a new understanding of Mary. The Council warns us in a wonderful way: *let us abstain from all exaggerations, but let us not minimize these realities* (n). This is the balance that the Council asks of us. In other words, our devotion to the Virgin should avoid a fanaticism that would hold up Mary as a god or the redeemer. This is not true and does not represent Mary's role in salvation history. Mary is the Mother of the Redeemer and a creature of the Creator God. Let us avoid, however, that arrogance that can be portrayed by people who act as though Mary were not necessary or others who speak of her in a disparaging or irreverent way. Both extremes must be avoided. We must avoid exaggerations. Mary is great and does not need any exaggeration. We must also avoid making her seem insignificant because she is not. God recognized Mary as the Mother of his Son and wanted her to be an intimate collaborator in the redemption of humankind and the dispenser of all his graces.

My sisters and brothers, this is the message of the Church on this first day of January. I hope and pray that as members of this People of God, we might be blessed in Christ who was Mary's gift to the world to which we belong. During this year, let us attempt to create a true Church, a Church that is pleasing to God. Let us live as God's chosen people and, together with Mary, who is also a member of this people, let us be light and salvation.

¹ Opening words not registered on the tape.

² National Democratic Organization (ORDEN), created by the Armed Forces of El Salvador in 1967 which, under the leadership of General José Alberto Medrano, became a means for controlling and repressing the campesinos.

³ Monsignor Romero challenged the official version, published by the *El Diario de Hoy*, which blamed members of the Popular Revolutionary Block (BPR) for the violence that took place in Tres Ceibas, in the canton Buena Vista in Suchitoto. See *El Diario de Hoy*, 27 November 1977.

⁴ Reference to the storeroom of the cloth factory NEMTEX in San Salvador. See *El Diario de Hoy*, 31 December 1977.

⁵ Mrs Elena Margarita Lima, wife of Luís Chiurato, manager of the firm SALTEX, was kidnapped on 6 September 1977; no group claimed responsibility and no demand was made for ransom.

⁶ See “Papa Paulo VI ilumina realidad salvadoreña”, *Orientación*, 1 January 1978.

Margin References (a) Nb 6,24-26: (b) Jn 17,11: (c) Lk 1,42: (d) Nb 6,23: (e) Gn 15,5: (f) Gn 15,6: (g) Lk 1,54-55: (h) Lk 1,38: (i) Ga 4,4: (j) Lk 1,30: (k) Lk 1,35: (l) AG 3: (m) Lk 2,16: (n) LG 67.