

# THE CHURCH'S WEAKNESS LEANS ON CHRIST

**Fifth Sunday of Ordinary Time**  
**February 5, 1978**

*Isaiah 58:7-10*

*1 Corinthians 2:1-5*

*Matthew 5:13-16*

.....my dear radio listeners<sup>1</sup> .

After this Sunday's celebration we will interrupt the Liturgical Year, the season that we call Ordinary Time. Perhaps you have noticed that we have celebrated five Sundays of Ordinary Time --- this is the name given to today's celebration: the fifth Sunday of Ordinary Time. Now we are going to interrupt this series of thirty-four Sundays and we will continue the celebration of Ordinary Time after the celebration of Pentecost when we will then celebrate the sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time.

Why this interruption? We are about to begin a powerful time of the year that is called Lent. This Wednesday is Ash Wednesday, a day on which the Church begins a great spiritual retreat, a time that is called Lent. During these forty days we imitate Christ who fasted for forty days in the desert in preparation for his public ministry. The Church invites us to live this season in a way that enables us to feel united to Jesus who calls us to penance and the interior renewal of our souls, hearts and lives. Therefore at this time I invite all of you on Wednesday (a work day) to find a Church where you are able to participate in this beautiful ceremony of the ashes.

Here in the Cathedral, I will have the opportunity to celebrate Mass at 7:00am. In this way the ashes that are blessed during the first Mass will be available for the people who will come to the Cathedral throughout the day. This is the custom that is followed in all the Churches so that in the various Masses in the Church, Catholics who participate in these celebrations can humbly bow their foreheads before God and remember the great principle of life, *Remember you are dust*. Thus Ash Wednesday receives its name: *and unto dust you shall return*. While the body is laid in the tomb, the interior life of humankind must be strengthened. Lent is not only an invitation to call to mind the reality of death, but it is above all an invitation to remember the obligation of renewing ourselves so that we might be salt and light and shine brightly before the world.

Ash Wednesday, then, has great importance in the Liturgical Year. Let us try to participate in Mass with a sense of inaugurating in a solemn way this season of Lent. In this way we prepare ourselves for the celebration of our Passover: the death and resurrection of Jesus in Holy Week. The Easter joy is extended for fifty days, until the time of the celebration of the coming of the Holy Spirit, the conquering of death through the resurrection of the Lord.

After we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit fifty days after Easter, we then return to the celebration of Ordinary Time and thus complete the thirty-four weeks that will bring us to the beginning of another Liturgical Year: the season of Advent, a time of preparation for the celebration of the Nativity of the Lord.

Notice the beauty and the effectiveness of the way in which the Liturgical Year is laid out. Indeed, the Church is the master of the spiritual life. The Liturgical Year is like a course, a great university established throughout the world so that as the Vatican Council says, *all people can celebrate the mysteries of salvation and become filled with saving grace* (a). The Liturgical Year does not simply remind us about the past but reminds us about the relevance of these mysteries in the present moment --- mysteries that save the world until the end of time. Each Liturgical Year these mysteries of Christ become present in our midst and our Sunday celebrations of the Eucharist unfolds these mysteries for us.

My sisters and brothers, this Sunday comes after February 2<sup>nd</sup>, the feast of Candlemas when we celebrate the presentation of Jesus in the Temple forty days after his birth. (b) At the time of his presentation the various laws of Moses were fulfilled: the circumcision of the first male child and the purification of his mother who, even though she was immaculate, wanted to give us this gesture of obedience to God's law, as well as a gesture of humility and respect for what God had stipulated. Here in the Cathedral, we venerate this beautiful image of the Virgin of the Presentation. I would like everyone in the Capital and in the Diocese to remember that this was the first image of the Virgin that our people venerated. This image was brought here by the Spaniards and they venerated this image and had great confidence in the Virgin. At a time when our country needs much protection from heaven, let us not forget this Virgin who accompanies us in our history: the Virgin of Candlemas under the title of the Virgin of the Presentation --- they are the same.

On this Sunday when Christ speaks to us about the light that every Christian ought to be, it is good that in our homily we join together this symbol of light and the celebration of Candlemas which is so popular among us. Many, however, go to the shrines of the Virgin of Candlemas and are not aware of the great significance of the lighted candles in the hands of Christians. In reality, this gesture brings to life the words of Jesus: Christians are lights that shine before the eyes of the world so that their example and their light might reveal the glory of God in the world. (c)

My sisters and brothers, together with our celebration of the Liturgical Year we are mindful of a number of feasts, while popular or traditional in their nature, ought yet to be celebrated according to the spirit of the Council and incorporated into the Liturgical Year. (d) For example, next Saturday, February 11<sup>th</sup> we celebrate the feast of our Lady of Lourdes. Here in our Diocese there are a number of sites that honor the Virgin of Lourdes: the parish of Lourdes, Lourdes in Colón, etc. I want to extend a special invitation to everyone to participate in the celebration that will take place in the Colegio of Lourdes in the grotto that is located at the school. There the Superior and the Carmelite Sisters will celebrate with the communities of the Diocese the seventy-fifth anniversary of their foundation.

The principal celebration in the school, on the road to San Marcos, will take place at 4:00pm and we will bring together the infirm from throughout the Diocese. The organizers of this event call upon the hospitals and those families who have some member who is ill to bring them to the grotto (if this is not inconvenient) so that they might participate in the celebration of our Lady of Lourdes. During the Mass we will bless those who are ill and if they so desire, we will also anoint them with the Oil of the Sick --- this is not a sacrament that makes the infirm person lose their hope of being restored to health. No longer called Extreme Unction, the Anointing of the Sick signifies a consecration of those persons who are ill. In this way, together with the Crucified Christ, they are able to make effective that which

Jesus desires of every sick person and of everyone who suffers: a suffering member who participates in Jesus' passion in order to save the world. This is an invitation that thus enables the infirm to consecrate their pain and infirmity through the intercession of the most immaculate Virgin of Lourdes and offer their suffering for the redemption of the world. My dear sisters and brothers who are ill and perhaps many of you are listening on your radios, I want you to know that your lives are not useless but rather you are a very valuable part of humankind. Know that on your sick beds and with your pain and physical incapacities you are offering yourselves to Christ Crucified who saved the world precisely when he died suffering on the cross.

### **Life of the Church and events of the week**

My sisters and brothers, this past week on February 2<sup>nd</sup>, I was unable to be with you. The Guadalupana Sisters invited me to travel to Mexico and celebrate with them the centennial anniversary of their foundation. As bishop, however, I never travel alone. I bring with me the whole Diocese and together with you I expressed the gratitude of this Archdiocese to the Sisters who from the time of Bishop Beloso y Sánchez have ministered here. At the present time these Sisters follow the modern goals of the Church and are involved in works of human development in the parish school of San Luis in Cuscatancingo, their Academy for *campesinos*. Next Saturday, on the feast of our Lady of Lourdes, the Sisters will undertake a pastoral work in the town of Arcatao. Indeed, it is a duty of this Archdiocese to give thanks to this Congregation of Sisters. The celebration in Mexico was presided over by the Cardinal of Mexico. He was joined by fourteen bishops who wanted to express their gratitude to the Sisters for their ministry in their various dioceses and about a hundred priests, on this centenary.

At the same time that I gave thanks to the Virgin of Guadalupe, I also prayed for the whole Diocese, for the priests, the religious men and women, the laity. I bring back to you many expressions of support and love from priests and theologians and people of great reflection who see in our Archdiocese a marvelous revelation of the Spirit of God. When one travels beyond the boundaries of one's Diocese, one begins to understand new perspectives that before were never imagined. I come back here very grateful to the Lord and I invite you to join with me and intensify our Christian commitment. My sisters and brothers of the Archdiocese of San Salvador, without realizing it we are doing wonderful things and people are watching us. To use the words of a theologian who spoke to me: *all of you in San Salvador are a Christian inspiration for many dioceses in Latin America and even in Europe --- these dioceses follow with great interest what is occurring there.*

I was very surprised that these humble homilies are listened to by the people there in Mexico and in other places on our Continent --- they are sent recordings of these homilies. Praised be God! I do not tell you this with an attitude of vanity but to encourage everyone to be faithful to the voice of the Spirit who inspires the life of our Church. Indeed, one of the truths of the Gospel --- *no prophet is without honor except in his native place, indeed in his own house* (e) --- is also fulfilled here where instead of admiration we encounter slander, misunderstanding, and criticism even though we admit that we are imperfect and human. I believe, however, that the positive values of this Church that is rooted in faith, the gospel and the sincere following of Jesus Christ are more important.

I did not want to speak about this here, but you are going to read about this in the newspaper. My duty of solidarity with all of you obliges me to also thank the Lord for the

honor that will be conferred upon me by Georgetown University, here in the Cathedral on February 14<sup>th</sup>. They are going to give me an Honorary Degree of Humanities. As I explained to you in *Orientación*,<sup>2</sup> if this were some personal honor, I would not have the courage to accept it. But because of its noble origins and above all, because of the solidarity that I feel with all my beloved priests and with all the People of God, I believe that this is an honor for the whole Archdiocese. Thus I ask you to join with me in giving thanks to the Lord.

My sisters and brothers, we cannot forget in the framework of our reflections this morning, our fraternal love and concern for our sister Republic of Nicaragua. I do not want to use my own words here but I do want to offer prayers for Nicaragua and focus on this situation and especially the document of the Bishops of Nicaragua which appeared in our newspaper *Orientación*.<sup>3</sup> In the bishops' message for the New Year they denounced the many forms of injustice and abuse that the people of Nicaragua have been subjected to. Above all I want to enlighten these events with the words of Pope Paul VI, words that he wrote in his encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, for in this way we can understand the lessons of these events. The events of history hold forth lessons for all people, and this page in history was written a long time ago and if this had been kept in mind, our sister Republic would not be facing the current bloodshed. Nor would there be bloodshed here in El Salvador. We do not want this; we do not want violence or civil war. It is for this reason that we cry out and join our voice to that of the Pope who years ago has said the same thing. Hopefully we will heed his words in time.

*Populorum Progressio* states: *The injustice of certain situations cries out for God's attention. Lacking the bare necessities of life, whole nations are under the thumb of others; they cannot act on their own initiative; they cannot exercise personal responsibility; they cannot work toward a higher degree of cultural refinement or a greater participation in social and public life. They are sorely tempted to redress these insults to their human nature by violent means* (f). We have always said that the cause of our discomfort, the origins of terrorism, and the source of this bloodshed is rooted in the social injustice. The Pope is saying the same thing in his encyclical.

Even more serious are the words that follow and I invite all of you to reflect on these words. Today these documents of the Church ought to be well known by Catholics. Therefore do not go telling others that I am calling people to become terrorists and other insane things --- these are simply slanders. The Pope has written these words. *Everyone knows, however, that revolutionary uprisings --- except where there is manifest longstanding tyranny which would do great damage to fundamental personal rights and dangerous harm to the common good of the country* (g). Thus there is an exception, an extraordinary case in which human rights and the common good are trampled upon. *Violence engenders new injustices, introduces new inequities and brings new disasters. The evil situation that exists, and it surely is evil, may not be dealt with in such a way that an even worse situation results.*

I believe the Pope's words are very clear. The Church's doctrine admits the possibility of violence as a last resort in the same way that war and self-defense is a last resort in defense of the common good. But it must always be mindful not to commit a greater evil in the attempt to achieve that which is good. This is a very difficult balance but it belongs to the Church's doctrine and is further explained by the Pope: *We want to be clearly understood on this point* (h), the Pope says. *We want to be clearly understood on this point: The present state of affairs must be confronted boldly, and its concomitant injustices must be challenged and overcome. Continuing development calls for bold innovations that will work profound*

*changes. The critical state of affairs must be corrected for the better without delay. Everyone must lend a ready hand to this task, particularly those who can do most by reason of their education, their office or their authority.*

Here my sisters and brothers, before arriving at a bloody revolution or a fratricidal struggle or a bloodbath, it would be better to put in place some peaceful means that would enable us to solve our problems. It is time for each one of us, especially those who because of their education or their situation have more influence in legal matters and in society to bring about the necessary changes. Profound and courageous changes are necessary if we want to avoid weeping later because of something that could have been done now but was not accomplished, perhaps because of selfishness.

This morning we are going to install Father Victor Guevara as the new pastor of San José de la Montaña. Father Juan Antonio Gutiérrez will also be installed as the new pastor in Colonia Dolores. We ask you to pray for the people of these communities who are part of the Archdiocesan family and whom we ought to love as sisters and brothers.

I also send my greetings and my thanks to the community of Cantón Jardín in Tejutla where I spent some time last Sunday in surroundings that were most appropriate to the gospel passage about the Sermon of the Mount. How beautiful are the mountains in this northern area of our country! How wonderfully do these people of noble heart embrace the Word of God! I want to greet especially some lay people, professionals, who at this time are collaborating in the evangelization of Cantón Jardín.

Finally, my sisters and brothers, I want to recommend two intentions to your prayers during this Mass: first, for Mrs. Chiurato whose whereabouts continue to remain a mystery and secondly, for the eternal rest of José Luis Martínez who died on February 5, 1975. Let us remember both of these persons in our prayers.

My sisters and brothers, in this framework that touches our hearts, our history, our prayers, our hopes, our personal problems and so many other areas of our family life, let us focus on the Word of God that illuminates all these realities. If the Word of God is only a theoretical reflection and not connected with our reality, even when that reality causes us pain, then the Word of God does not illuminate and enlighten. Today, in my homily, I want to present to you the Church that finds support in Christ for its weakness. Therefore, this morning's reflection could be entitled: the Church that finds support for its weakness in Christ.

### **The Church, salt of the earth and light of the world**

Since we are about to interrupt the Liturgical Year in this season of Ordinary Time, a time of routine and monotony, let us be mindful of this passage from the Sermon on the Mount and sincerely seek Christian renewal --- an individual, collective and family renewal. The Sermon on the Mount continues to be the theme during these days of Ordinary Time. Jesus, after proclaiming the Beatitudes that we heard last Sunday, directly addresses us and speaks to us as Christians: *You have to be the light of the world. One does not light a lamp and then hide it under a bushel basket but rather the lamp is placed on a lampstand so that it illuminates the whole house. You are like an illuminated city, a city on the mountain that cannot be hidden (i). You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, what good is it? (j).*

What good is the Church or a Christian when their preaching and example become flattery and obsequious and a desire to be seen in a good light by the world? Tasteless salt! Extinguished light! How easy to appear in a good light before the world, but how ineffective is a lamp that no longer gives off light! What good is it? The Church needs each one of us and all of us. Every Christian must be a torch and all Christians together must be like that city on the mountain.

I was deeply moved while I was in Mexico and listened to people speak about our Church being this city on the mountain. Others said that our Church inspired many other Churches on this continent and even in Europe. Let us not become vain as we listen to these words! Let us, however, feel the responsibility to honor this expectation of the world with regard to our Church. Please, let every Christian take seriously their personal witness. I give thanks to the Lord because in these difficult times for our Archdiocese, many personal witnesses have arisen. In a Novitiate in Mexico, I heard some priests say: *We have never had so many vocations from El Salvador as we have had this year.* I have heard the same words from religious communities of women. In the seminary where the students are participating in their annual retreat and beginning another academic year --- so many beautiful vocations! A medical student from Aguilares told me: *I am not satisfied with this career that I first embraced and I have sought entrance into the Novitiate. Now, I want to become a priest!*

My sisters and brothers, the other professions are in no way inferior to the priesthood or religious life. Every vocation is valuable because that is where God wants one to be. Therefore, in the name of Christ, I want to place before you this calling: May every one become a light in their own proper profession. My position as bishop is my vocation. The position of my brother priests in the towns and parishes is their vocation, their place. The position of the women religious in the schools, hospitals, missions --- that is their vocation. And your vocation, my dear lay sisters and brothers: the doctor, lawyer, engineer, employee, merchant, baggage handler, laborer, carpenter --- every one must live their proper vocation.

How beautiful would this life be if each one of us were proud of our profession, if we were not ambitious to have more things --- that is selfishness --- but if we simply desired to be light to the world! How beautiful would our society be if people were not attached to this ideal of enriching themselves, having more of the earth's goods! We have spoken about this here before as an eloquent expression of moral underdevelopment: idolatry, the frenzy for power, the desire to have, greed. People shine when they are the Lord's light and when they make their profession a way of serving humanity, when as a lamp they are consumed and yet continue giving light.

My sisters and brothers, as a community and a Church, let us draw near to one another and become more united in the Archdiocese. I am grateful to you, my beloved priests, for this witness of your unity with the bishop. I am also grateful to the religious women for the many expressions of solidarity with this sign of unity --- the bishop. I am also grateful to the communities, parishes, base communities of faith and to all authentic Catholics for confirming this reality that we are that illuminated city on the mountain. Each day may we show that we are worthy of the precious gifts that the Lord bestows upon us. May we be faithful to these words that the Council spoke about the Church: *The Church, like a stranger in a foreign land, presses forward amid the persecutions of the world and the consolations of God* (k). My sisters and brothers, I do not pretend to be anything else but a Christian, a bishop --- a Christian who is fulfilling his role as a sign of unity. I am not more important than anyone else but simply a sign of this unity. Those who accept this sign, build in this

unity of the Church; those who reject this sign, reject the unity of the Church and destroy and extinguish this unity. They have become tasteless salt.

### **Good works are the Church's splendour**

My second thought is this: good works are the Church's splendour. Notice the insistence on this point in today's readings. Good works on behalf of the poor. How beautiful and eloquent are Isaiah's words: *Share your bread with the hungry; shelter the homeless; clothe the naked when you see them and do not turn your back on your own* (l). I am like the beggar; it is my own that are hungry. I am like the person who asks for shelter; it is my own that are cold --- give them a coat. Feel deeply this fraternity and identity with the other but especially with Christ, for everything that you do for a sister or brother, you do for Christ (m).

How could the Church not be pained by a civilization of selfishness, a civilization of inequality and cruelty, a civilization in which the poor, the helpless, the hungry, the naked, and the homeless are viewed as if they were not persons, as inhuman? My sisters and brothers, we say this not to defend laziness or idleness, for the Bible says: *if anyone is unwilling to work, then that one should not eat* (n). We are dealing with situations that have become very common among us, as if there were different classes of people: the rich and the poor. Yes, we are all from one flesh and we have the same origin and destiny. Christ has loved all of us and identified with all of us.

Let us love and do good works, for as the prophet says: *Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your wound shall be healed; your vindication shall go before you and the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard* (o). This is the glory that follows the Church and those who live with justice and charity. Therefore my sisters and brothers, in this Archdiocese every one of us must be enkindled with justice, the defense of human rights, freedom and equality. We must look at others with the eyes of faith. Do not forget that people will try to prevent us from being the Lord's light. Thus, do not act like some philanthropists. There are many groups that do good, but act in this way to have their names published in the newspapers or a plaque erected that proclaims them as great benefactors. There are many who do good but so often they seek the applause of the world. The Church, however, seeks to call every one to live with justice and love, for this is the good of those who act rightly. Indeed, the benefactor does more good than the beneficiary.

In this way, *you shall call and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help and he will say: Here I am!* (p). What more could we want? There is one rule by which to judge if God is near us or is far away --- the rule that God's Word gives us today: everyone concerned for the hungry, the naked, the poor, everyone concerned for those who have vanished in police custody, for those who have been tortured, for prisoners, for all people that suffer --- these have God close at hand. The essence of religion is not found in praying often. Rather the essence of religion is found in this guarantee of having God close to us because we do good works on behalf of our sisters and brothers. The way that we know that our prayers are heard is very easy to know. We simply have to ask the question: how do we treat the poor? Because that is where God is. The degree to which we approach them and the love with which we approach them or the scorn with which we approach them --- this is how we approach God. What we do to them, we do to God. The way we look at them is the way we look at God. God has desired to be identified in such a way that the merits of each one of us and of society are measured by the way we treat the needy and the poor.

Dear poor people, disposed people, you who lack house and food, your very dignity demands your advancement. It is a pity that you, the poor, should not respect yourselves as you ought and that you try to drown yourselves --- in drink, in bad habits, in excess --- and thus diminish the dignity that could be God's light, God's presence on earth. We do not praise poverty for itself. We praise it as a sign, as the sacrament of God in the world. A sacrament must be respected, because it is a sign of God. The poor must respect themselves, must better themselves, must work to the extent that the scope of their economic and social powers enable them.

Do not fall asleep, for the Church and religion do not want to be the opium of the people. Indeed the Church is confronted with conflicts because she tries to develop humankind and says to men and women: *you are all equal and you have the same rights as all of your sisters and brothers*. The Church finds herself in the midst of conflict because she wants people to see themselves as creators of the nation's destiny and not as a sleeping mass of people. Therefore the Church's promotion of the human person is maliciously confused with subversive ideas and other forms of slander. Yet in all of this the Church seeks the same thing as the prophets: she proclaims the development of the human person knowing that God is hidden in each person. Therefore respect for each person, even the most poor and indigent person, is respect for and devotion to our God. Indeed, this could be seen as a form of adoring our God.

### **The weaknesses of the Church finds its sublime support in Christ.**

Finally, my sisters and brothers, my third thought is the following: the weaknesses of the Church, the poverty of the Church, the human limitations of the Church, find their sublime support in Christ, our Lord. Here I focus on the reading from Saint Paul whose context I have already explained. Paul is in Ephesus in Corinth where he has already worked more than a year. He gets news that the community is forgetting its origins and looking at worldly wisdom; that many Christians are proud to follow Apollo, the preacher from Alexandria; that Greeks are scandalized by the cross of Christ; that Jewish converts also look on the cross as madness and seek support from worldly things, money, politics, certain human privileges. What an easy temptation this is, brothers and sisters!

When persecutions against the Church end and a climate of goodwill follows, this is celebrated by the historians. Preparing my homily for the feast of St Sebastian, I was reading how a historian – I think, Eusebius<sup>4</sup> – said that, after the persecution, the Emperor showed favour to the Church and we didn't know how to take advantage of it but spent our time quarrelling with others and looking for our own profit. I wonder if this wasn't due to the benefits given. In Mexico, a very reflective priest told me: *I have great fear for Mexico because today the Church is too well off. We have more things today than we did before the Revolution and I am fearful that the Church is too comfortable and has forgotten about her transcendent character.*

For this reason we return to the words of Saint Paul in his letter to the Corinthians. What a wonderful *Magna Charta* for every preacher. How I would want to say to you my beloved Catholics of the Archdiocese of San Salvador: *When I come to you proclaiming the mystery of God, I did not come with sublimity of words or of wisdom. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified* (q). My sisters and brothers, I do not want human wisdom and eloquence to intervene in my poor speech, because then I would be giving you the world's vanity and not the wisdom of the Crucified. *I come to you in*



*weakness and fear and much trembling* (r). God knows how hard it was for me also to come here to the Capital. How timid I have felt before you, except for the support that you, as Church, have given me. You have made your bishop a sign of Christianity. My sisters and brothers, you are the builders of this Church.

*In my speeches and the sermons that I gave – says St Paul – there were none of the arguments that belong to philosophy: only a demonstration of the power of the Spirit, so that your faith – note the reason – should not depend on human philosophy but on the power of God.* (s) This will be my boast. When I hear people tell me: *I have returned to the Church. Before I had lost the faith, but I now feel that faith has been reborn in my heart,* I feel that it is neither my words nor my attitude nor anything to do with me, but rather it is the power of the Spirit, the power of God --- the only One who can touch the heart of each person.

What is my word? What is human wisdom but a noise that reaches the outer ear? But from that ear to the heart lies a road that only God can travel. Blessed is the preacher who does not put his trust in the noise of his own words, even though they come wrapped in great human wisdom. My dear companions and brother priests, let us take as our own this passage from today's reading. Let us not place our trust in the power of the earth. I have never tolerated or allowed the proclamation of the gospel to be preached with the language of revolution. When people have accused one of the priests of preaching revolution, I have asked for proof, concrete cases. Only in this way are we able to move forward. Many times these accusations are simply slanderous or information from third parties or persons with vested interests. Then when I have spoken with the priest and asked for his thoughts about all of this, I discover that his language is nothing other than the wisdom of Christ who knew how to cry out against injustice and never tolerated abusive behavior toward the poor and the needy.

Therefore the Church must be very careful and so too must the Base Communities of Faith and biblical reflection groups --- when they reflect on the Bible and the Word of God they must seek only the wisdom of the Crucified Christ and not political power or wealth. How many persons have been seduced and become this tasteless salt because they looked for fragile support in the powers of the world. Also we cannot go to the other extreme and place our trust in violence or armaments. This is not Christian language.

It is for this reason that we have read today some passages from *Populorum Progressio* because we must use this time to avoid further bloodshed. We must be willing to undertake bold transformations that suppose the conversion of the heart, the conversion of people from worshipping the idols of this world to a worship of One God whom we all must love and serve. We must view the goods of this world from the perspective of God and create a civilization of love and a civilization of the children of God.

My sisters and brothers, let us live intensely as Church, as a Church that is poor and seeks its support in Christ. And in order that we do not simply speak words, the Eucharist is now prepared on the altar. Let us celebrate this Mass in intimate communion with our Lord Jesus Christ. Hopefully everyone who is participating in this reflection will feel awakened in them the depths of this Christianity and will hear Jesus say: *You are the light of the world! You are the salt of the earth.* With Paul may we respond: *When I came to you proclaiming the mystery of God, I did not come with sublimity of words or of wisdom. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified.* So be it.

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<sup>1</sup> Greeting not registered on the tape of the homily.

<sup>2</sup> See “Carta de Mons. Oscar A. Romero”, *Orientación*, 5 nFebruary 1978.

<sup>3</sup> Episcopal Conference of Nicaragua, *Mensaje al pueblo de Dios al iniciarse el año 1978* (6 January 1978).

<sup>4</sup> Eusebius of Cesarea, in his *Ecclesiastical History*, reflects on the peace the Roman Emperor Constantine gave to the Church. Perhaps Mons. Romero is alluding to a letter from the Emperor on the divisions between the bishops. See *Ecclesiastical History*, X, 5.

*Margin References* (a) SC 102: (b) Lk 2,22-24: (c) Mt 5,16: (d) SC 103: (e) Lk 2,24: (f) PP 30: (g) PP 31: (h) PP 32: (i) Mt 5,14-15: (j) Mt 5,13: (k) LG 8: (l) Is 58,7: (m) Mt 25,40: (n) 2 Th 3,10: (o) Is 58,8: (p) Is 58,9: (q) 1Cor 2,1-2: (r) 1Cor 2,3: (s) 1Cor 2,4.