

CHRIST LIVES, CHRIST HAS RISEN

Sixth Sunday of Easter
April 30, 1978

Acts 8:5-8, 14-17
1 Peter 3:15-18
John 14:15-21

My dear sisters and brothers.

The conclusion of the Easter season coincides with one of the most transcendent manifestations of God. Within fifteen days we will have completed the fifty days of the Easter season and at that time we will celebrate the feast of Pentecost, the crowning celebration of the Easter season. Last Sunday, today and next week Jesus, through his Church, speaks to us about this Spirit that prolongs his redemptive presence among humankind. These Sundays are very important for our Christian formation. We are instructed about how to live a Christian life on earth and how to live with hope and joy and strength.

Therefore we have to live our lives firmly rooted on the earth. The life that Jesus shares with us is not meant to uproot us from history but rather is meant to place in the hearts of humankind, the builders of history, a Christian strength that enables all people to become creators of their own history. Christians who live among the realities of the world and are lacking this gospel strength are called disenchanting or displaced Christians. It would be better if they were angels rather than human persons. Jesus came to live among us and has implanted his doctrine, his faith, and his Church in the hearts of concrete people, in the hearts of all of us who are here celebrating this Eucharist or listening to this reflection on God's Word on the radio, in the hearts of all those who are here today, on this last day of April, 1978, in the hearts of all the people of El Salvador, people who live in the towns and villages and are meditating on this Word of God today.

Events of the Week

We cannot forget that in the midst of fear and hope, advances and frustrations, people are preparing to celebrate May 1st, Labor Day. On this Labor Day who is not thinking about the seventeen workers from the Central Refinery of Izalco who have been imprisoned since January 30th because they participated in a strike and demanded a new work contract? Who does not remember the thirty-five workers who have been separated from their companions who work in the INCA factory where certain privileges and advantages have been given to certain workers with the hope of persuading them to refrain from joining a labor union.

The same struggle against the right of workers to organize themselves is being carried on in several factories where workers are denied this right, as well as their right to defend their human rights. Here I do not want to appear to be speaking against management but rather I urge both labor and management to come to a mutual understanding so that true progress can

become a reality. Labor and capital, management and workers must come together as one if we are to have any progress.

We cannot forget that a group of lawyers is struggling to obtain an amnesty and have published the reasons that have led them to ask this favor for so many who perish in our prisons [the Archdiocese has also supported a general amnesty for those arrested in San Pedro Perulapán]. These lawyers also report anomalies in the procedures of the First Criminal Court, where the judge does not allow lawyers to enter with their defendants, while the Guardia Nacional is allowed to be present and intimidate the accused, who often bear evident marks of torture. A judge who does not report signs of torture and does not allow himself to be swayed by its effect on the testimony of the accused is not a just judge.

I think, sisters and brothers, in view of these injustices that are seen all about, even in the first Court, not to speak of many other tribunals, judges that sell themselves ---[interrupted by applause]. What does the Supreme Court of Justice do? What of the function, so transcendent in a democracy, of this power that should be above every other power and should demand justice of everyone that violates it? I believe that the key to a great part of the malaise of our country is in the president of the Supreme Court and all his co-workers, who with greater integrity ought to demand of the courts, of the tribunals, of the judges, of all the administrators of that sacred word *justice* that they truly be agents of justice. I wish to congratulate the lawyers, Christian and non-Christian who, with a great sense of justice, are putting their finger on the sore. May all our lawyers be truly a hope for justice, which is so ill-treated in our surroundings!

We also mourn this week the death of two policemen. They are our brothers. In cases of abuse and violence, my voice has never been one-sided. With Christ's compassion I have stood by the side of the dead, of the victims, and those who suffer. I ask that we pray for them, and that we join with their families in their sorrow. I declare that the two policemen who were killed are two more victims of the injustice of our system, which I condemned last Sunday. Among its worst crimes is that it pits our poor against one another; policemen, workers or *campesinos*, they all belong to the class of the poor. It is evil of the system to pit poor against poor. Two policemen killed are two poor men who are victims of others, also poor perhaps; and in any case they are victims of that god Moloch, insatiable for power and money (a). As long as he maintains his state of affairs, he cares not about the life of the *campesinos*, or the policemen, or the soldier; he only struggles to defend a system full of sin.

Yesterday, the third phase of the Educational Reform was inaugurated with a hopeful perspective. I was happy to see the presence of our Catholic educational centers in this meeting in which they will be able to defend the hopes of our people. If the result of our educational reform is just the establishment of a program that must be followed in the schools, followed by students and teachers, if our educational reform creates another instrument of domination and alienation and does not create a process in which people are formed to become the creators of the history of our nation, then we will together have to lament one of the greatest frustrations of our educational system. I have the testimony of educational experts who say that they are hopeful that the valid principles of the reform of 1968 will not be lost but perfected. For example, they speak about an educational process in which the principal actors are the students and the national reality. Thus students would be given the instruments that would enable them to analyze the reality of the nation. They would be prepared as agents of transformation instead of alienated with an accumulation of texts and techniques that attempt to conceal the national reality. There are many technicians,

wise people and professionals who are very competent in their field of study, but unfortunately they are like angels for they make no connection between their studies and the reality in which they live. One of the primary goals of education ought to be incarnating the human person in the reality, helping people to analyze and critique their reality. An education that seeks to involve people in a process of conscious, democratic, political participation Ah! How much good could be accomplished with such a process! Many values of the people of El Salvador are being lost! Our educational system has not made people responsible for this participation in the common good.

These experts who have studied the reforms of 1968 also tell me that in those reforms there is a sense of national autonomy that would be good to continue to cultivate. This would allow people to discover in their own reality the powers for the growth and development of a national identity and they would also come to see the harmful effects of being dependent on other nations. We celebrate September 15th [Independence Day] with a great participation of the school students. But, what are we teaching these students? A celebration of Independence when we are extremely dependent. As the Pope said in *Populorum Progressio: Cultural and economic imperialism is worse than political imperialism.*(b) Our educational system ought to teach students a sense of national autonomy so that they can become agents of true independence who criticize our international slavery and dependence.

Another principle of the educational reform of 1968 is the cultivation of science and technology for the service of the common good and not for the benefit of certain privileged groups or individuals. Much of our technology serves a few people and not the common good. Very often our technicians, who have been educated at a great cost, instead of placing their knowledge at the service of the common good, seek their own personal or family profit and leave the country. There is a great exodus of intellectuals which in turn impoverishes our nation that needs these technicians who could help resolve some of the problems that afflict our people.

The fruit of a true educational reform ought to be the following: the formation of teachers and students who can critically analyze the national reality and are able to transmit effective and helpful criteria to the next generation. We ask the Lord to bless the efforts of the Education Ministry and we pray that they avoid all forms of manipulation and blindness. May they provide a response to the anguish and the hope of our people who are surrounded by so many different problems.

Therefore, my sisters and brothers, I want to point out some ways that will enable us to breathe again. I say this because a few weeks ago a young woman who was listening to my homily asked me: *then what can we do?* What an interesting question! Like those who listened to the preaching of the apostles and then asked: *what are we to do then, brothers?* (c). I told her: *The Church cannot offer you a technique and the Church does not possess a social system. The Church inspires the systems and individuals with Christianity so that those who live in the world might use their inventiveness and seek solutions. We have structures, like those I have pointed out: the Supreme Court, the Ministry of Education --- these are two structures that if they were placed at the service of the people and if they truly desired to overcome our violent turbulence, I truly believe they could do much. At the very least, they could take some small but definitive steps that would lead us out of the troublesome situation in which our nation finds itself.*

The Church is not the responsible party in all of this. She is, however, responsible as the preacher of the Gospel and the morality of Christ to point out sin wherever she finds it and thus to call people to repentance and conversion. Because the day that every person who is working or living in the present structures, the day that they transform their hearts and become true Christians, on that day they will become effective agents in the construction of a better nation. Therefore, the Church looks at her specific power and gifts.

Life of the Church

And here I share with you a series of news and announcements that enables all people to collaborate in the building up of our Church. We come together here and feel at home. We come together as a family and share our intimate hopes and the hopes of this Church.

Tomorrow we begin the month of May, a month dedicated to the Virgin Mary. We do not want to cultivate an attitude of sentimentality since that would not be true devotion to Mary. My sisters and brothers, I want to tell you that Mary is an inspiration for all times and for all people. The month of May should have meaning for all people, not just Catholics, but all those Salvadorians who are attempting to discover strong hope during these hours. Look at Mary! A woman of prayer, a woman committed to her people and above all, a woman dedicated to God: *I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word* (d). Thus we have an invitation to make the month of May a month of prayer, a month of reflection, a month of inspiration by the Virgin Mary. If we accept this invitation, so much good becomes possible. Pope Paul VI says: *For many people, popular piety is their only encounter with Christ and with God.* Certainly Mary is a sure way to encounter God.

Tomorrow, May 1st, as I do on the first day of every month but especially tomorrow, Labor Day, the first day of May, the feast of Saint Joseph the Worker, I want to invite you to a celebration that I am pleased to offer every month. In the beautiful chapel of Divina Providencia Hospital, at 5:00pm, we will celebrate a Holy Hour. I ask you to celebrate this first day of May, this Holy Hour in Divina Providencia Hospital and together let us ask God to be merciful to our country.

Within this framework of popular piety I want to give you a reminder and an announcement. Wednesday, May 3rd, our people will celebrate the feast of the Holy Cross. This is a solemn feast for our people and anyone who wants to obtain further information about some of the beautiful interpretations and expressions of this feast can read the famous poem of Alfredo Espino, *3 de Mayo*.¹ Here one discovers the customs of our nation: the May flowers, the first rains of winter, and the fruits that adorn the roads that lead to our homes. What a beautiful invitation to see in Christ's cross the Liturgical greeting: *Ave Crux, spes unica!*² *Hail O Cross, the only hope!* My sisters and brothers, let us make this celebration more than a celebration of folklore. Let us adore the cross, and as we place fruits and flowers on the cross, let us see these as a sign of the great hope that is in our hearts.

I also want to announce to you that next Sunday, May 7th, the Sunday before our celebration of Pentecost, we will celebrate the Day of Social Communication. Those instruments, such as radio, press, television and the movies are referred to as means of social communication. They are a wonderful means to communicate our thinking. If they are not used well, then they become instruments that are manipulated to create a false common opinion. We have often lamented the fact that our media so frequently communicate false information. Therefore I call upon everyone to be critical as you use the newspapers, movies,

television and radio. Let us listen critically and search for the truth. Not everything that is communicated to us is the truth. Let us know how to weed out the lies and discover the little truth that is there.

At the same time we can give thanks to God for our own means of communication. Thanks to God we have our newspaper, *Orientación*, which each day is growing in popularity. We have a radio station which enables us to present the Church's thinking. But do not forget, my sisters and brothers, that the radio is managed by human people and there are many imperfections in the human person. Let us learn how to distinguish between programs. When the Archbishop speaks, like he is doing at this moment, it is the official voice of the Church. But I am not responsible for many other programs nor for the *rancheras* that are sung nor all those other programs that are produced with a sense of wanting to be faithful to the Church's thinking --- programs that do not want to betray the Church's teaching. Keep in mind that all those who collaborate with the Church's means of communication want to be in harmony with the thinking of the actual Church. Therefore, before condemning our Church's means of communication, know how to discern these means from others. Ask yourself: *Are you displeased with these means of communication because you prefer to manipulate and corrupt the media? Do you want the media to maintain the sinful situation of our country and therefore you are disturbed by cries against the unjust situations and the disorder that seems to rule in our land?*

At this time the feast of Pentecost is approaching. We are preparing to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation for a group of young men and women --- this is one of the successes in our new approach to the administration of this sacrament. On the day of Pentecost, our nation will celebrate Seminary Day. I ask for your prayers on this day. The very fact that a group of young men and women will receive the Sacrament of Confirmation is a message that we are cultivating vocations for our seminaries. Please do not forget that we also need the monetary, material and economic support of the People of God in order to sustain the work of the Church's means of communication and her seminaries.

I also want to announce that on May 3rd, a novena will begin in the parish of Maramonte and will conclude on May 11th, the day that marks the anniversary of the death of Father Alfonso Navarro. On that day we will celebrate the Eucharist with all the priests and all the communities of the Archdiocese.

I want to greet and thank the community of San Marcos where Father Mario Sanconetto and his people celebrated the feast of their patron, Saint Mark. My heart was filled with joy to see a community that was so alive and palpitating with the Spirit.

My dear sisters and brothers, I want to remind you that on Monday, at 1:00pm, Father Luis Burguet will comment on my homily on our radio station. He makes this commentary with very sound criteria. He knows how to integrate other values that just seem to escape me.

Lastly, I want to unite myself in prayer to the mourning family members of the child Mittala Rivas Laguardia and the family members of Don Hipólito Morales. I also ask prayers for María Isabel Campos and all the needs of the family and people who at this moment are in communion with the Church of the Archdiocese.

My sisters and brothers, I now want to make the readings that we have just heard a message for the workers. In my homily today I want to speak some words that are

illuminated by the Word of God and I want to direct these words to the world of work. When I say *worker*, or *world of work*, I am not only thinking about the workers and the *campesinos*, but I am also thinking about management and the investment of capital, I am thinking about the government and politicians, and businessmen and women. I am thinking about those who have been the victims of fire bombings and all those who struggle and work. All of this is work. I also think of those contemplatives who in their monasteries pray and mortify themselves, fast and make themselves holy and become victims for the world. Everyone works. The only ones who do not work are those who have become involved in different forms of vice or are lazy --- these people do not participate in the construction of history and are truly living on the margins of society.

Everyone wants to place themselves at the service of the common good: work, capital, politics, etc. --- we are all workers. Let us not become divided among ourselves! Under this title: WORK, let us seek our own vocation. May I live the beauty of my priestly vocation! May you live the beauty of your profession as lawyer, doctor, engineer, etc. As a worker may you experience pride as you use your saw and carving knife. As a *campesino* may you experience pride as you use your machete, your plow, and your oxen. You, women who work in the market, what a joy to earn a living even when you have to bear with inclement weather and the burning sun. In that way, each one of you is struggling as a worker. How beautiful it is to consider the fact that each person is the image of God --- an image of the God of whom Jesus said: *My Father is at work until now* (e).

God created the world, but did not make it perfect. Rather he trusted this work of perfecting his creation to those whom he created in his image and likeness. God did not complete his work of creation intentionally so that the human person would perfect it. Today, when people involved in technology discover the secret of the atom, the energy of the sun, the secrets of the earth and the ocean, they are not creating something new. God accomplished the great work of creation. But this God wants his children, those created in his image and likeness, to discover the atom, the land, the sea, space and make interplanetary journeys --- he wants them to do all of this through human labor. The worker/man/woman is an imitation of the worker/God and is perfecting creation and thus transforming the world.

Therefore, Jesus is the revelation of God/worker and the revelation of man/woman/worker. Let us focus on Christ because as he said in the first reading today: *Philip, go to the city of Samaria and proclaim the Messiah to them* (f). This is what the Church has preached because in Christ the Church has received the great revelation of God and of man. But humankind has misinterpreted this revelation and proclaimed a class struggle that has resulted in class distinctions. But if we would only interpret this revelation in the same way that Jesus did, namely a revelation that joins together the infinite work of God to the finite work of the human person --- if we interpreted this revelation in this way then we would have a society of justice, peace and progress. This is the central thought of my homily: Christ lives and Christ has risen. We have seen him and we shall live.

Christ lives and is God

In the second reading Saint Peter says: *Christ was put to death in the flesh, but he was brought to life in the spirit* (g). He died in the flesh. All flesh dies. All flesh ages. The flesh creates differences among people --- old and young, rich and poor. But this flesh is dead. All material things die because they only have a relative, temporal value. But Christ was brought to life in the Spirit. This is the life that is truly important: to have a vision of how to work

not for a flesh that perishes, not for some goods that remain behind after death, but to have a vision of how to work with the great worker who died like all workers but lives now in the Spirit.

Jesus tells his disciples: *The Spirit remains with you and will be in you* (h). If Christ continues to live today, my sisters and brothers, it is because of this Spirit that Jesus has given to us. But this Jesus, man-worker, do people really know who this Jesus is when they confuse him with the other carpenters in Nazareth? *How can this man be preaching to us? Is he not the carpenter's son?* (i). This is the deceiving vision of people who behold the worker and see him as simply the son of another worker. But when faith discovers that this worker of Nazareth bears within himself the life of God, then my sisters and brothers we can understand the meaning of this beautiful passage of the Second Vatican Council: *we hold that through labor offered to God man is associated with the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, who conferred an eminent dignity on labor when at Nazareth he worked with his own hands* (j). Therefore, every person who looks at their hands is able to say that these are the hands of God and thus the hands of a worker are also God's hands if they identify themselves with Christ who is God and who is incarnated in the worker.

May all people who are involved in so many different occupations --- and I once again remind you here that Labor Day is a day for all men and women to celebrate --- may all these people realize that the work that they do to serve their neighbor and earn a living are the human means that enable us to place ourselves at the service of God, that enable us to worship God (as I said last Sunday when I spoke about the priestly significance of the baptized people). All baptized members of the human family have become members of Christ's family and as members of Christ's family they have a divine dignity. The sweat of the worker, the concern of the professional, the sincere work of the politician who seeks the common good --- all these people are identified with the thinking, the hands, the sweat, and the footsteps of Christ-God-man.

My sisters and brothers, I would like all of us to re-read the second reading and come to understand the significance of these words of Jesus for our lives. Saint Peter says: *May all workers and people sanctify Christ as Lord in their hearts. Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope, but do it with gentleness and reverence, keeping your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who defame your good conduct in Christ may themselves be put to shame. For it better to suffer for doing good, if that be the will of God, than for doing evil* (k).

My sisters and brothers, humankind forms two different worlds. There is the sincere world of those who try to follow Christ and allow their actions to be inspired by Christ. There is also the world where people turn their backs on Christ, people who, as we read in the gospel, *do not accept the Spirit of truth because they neither see it nor know it* (l). There is the world of those who suffer because they do good and the world of those who suffer because they do evil. There is the world of those who are tortured and unjustly slandered and persecuted and there is the world of those who persecute and perhaps they believe that they are doing good when they torture and riddle their sisters and brothers with bullets. We are told, however, that it is better *to sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts and to be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope* (m).

I believe that our Church in San Salvador is giving the reason for her hope, because she does not put her hope in power or money but in the source of her hope, which is Christ

crucified. Her faithfulness to the gospel is her hope; her hope is being faithful to God. I tell my beloved priests, the religious communities, the Catholic schools, the parishes, the grassroots communities: *Do not be led astray either by the allure of power and money or by following false ideologies. True hope is not found there either. True hope is not found in a revolution of violence and bloodshed. True hope is not found in money and power. True hope is neither found on the left nor on the right. The hope that we must account for and that makes us speak with valor is found in Christ, who reigns even after death. And with him will reign all those who have preached his justice, his love, his hope and his peace.*

This, my sisters and brothers, is Christ the worker, the Christ who incarnates himself in the life of the workers and shares with them the infinite dignity of God. Blessed are those workers who on this Labor Day base your demands --- the social demands that are your rights --- not on the ideologies of this world nor on brute force but on reason and faith and hope and on the rights that are based on God, the source of every right.

What is Christ's dynamism?

My second thought is the following: what is Christ's dynamism? If Christ is the model and the source of every worker, where is his dynamism?

This Sunday prepares us to receive the Holy Spirit in fifteen days and we hear Jesus say: *I will ask the Father, and he will give you the Spirit (n).* Jesus calls the Spirit *another advocate, the spirit of truth*, the consummation of unity. My sisters and brothers, this language appears to be unintelligible in today's gospel, nevertheless it is the great message of this Sunday for Jesus tells us: *I will not leave you orphans... In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me because I live and you will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father and you are in me and I in you (o).* I am going to repeat this phrase because at first sight it seems to be an enigma and yet it is the most sublime revelation of our Christianity: *I, Christ, am in the Father and you are in me and I in you.* Look at this beautiful chain! *Whoever has my commandments and observes them is the one who loves me. And whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and reveal myself to him (p).*

My sisters and brothers, what does all of this mean? It is the most sublime revelation. Your life as a worker, your life as a poor person who lives in a cardboard house, your life as a rich person who lives in a palace, your life has no meaning unless you become part of this current and identify yourself with Christ because united with Christ you are with God and God is with you. This is Christ's dynamic and the divine energy of the Spirit.

It would seem that the Church, after twenty centuries and so many persecutions and so much fury directed against her, should have disappeared. It would seem that the Church should no longer exist here in El Salvador. But the dynamism and the strength of the Church is not centered in men and women who so often can be fragile and sinful. I am not surprised when people criticize me because of my sins --- I know I am sinful. Who is not sinful? But those who look at the speck in their sister's or brother's eye so often forget the beam that is in their own eye. These persons must first remove the beam from their own eyes, the dung from their own eyes, so that they do not look upon others with a look of dung. We must have this perspective: the Church as a human institution would not continue in existence, but the Church exists because men and women place their trust in Christ, and Christ is in God and God is in Christ and in us. This is a movement that, through Christ, passes from this earth to

heaven. Christ comes down to earth and shares with us the Spirit of God, the Spirit of truth and the Spirit of strength.

My dear sisters and brothers, on this Labor Day and as we approach the celebration of Pentecost I invite you to avoid making your work, whatever that might be, a source of divisions, contentions and rivalries. Every form of work is honorable and every social situation is good when we allow ourselves to be swept up in this current that through Christ elevates us to God. Then this God, full of love, comes down to share his love with humankind. It is for this reason that Christ establishes a sign, a indispensable condition that reveals our participation in this current, our participation in this life of God: *if you love me, you will keep my commandments* (r). At the conclusion of today's gospel Jesus says: *Whoever has my commandments and observes them is the one who loves me* (s). Here we have the secret of the Church's true dynamic. Here is the true source of Christianity's power: Love.

My sisters and brothers, I never tire of speaking these words about love even though the revolutionary forces receive these words with machine guns and other instruments that are unable to establish peace. I never tire of speaking these words about love even though people criticize the Church because she only preaches love, even though there are people who do not want to understand that the love that the Church preaches is a dynamic love and not a love that is dead or a love that conforms itself to the present situation. The Church preaches a love that struggles. Therefore on this May 1st I want to speak to all workers and tell you: *it is right that you struggle for your just demands, but do not allow this struggle to be based on the power of your weak arms and organizations.*

I want to read you these words of Paul VI: *The Church strives always to insert the Christian struggle for liberation into the universal plan of salvation which she herself proclaims* (t). In other words, all these struggles for liberation that are undertaken by the workers and different organizations and by people who come together to defend human rights and make liberation a reality, *the Church is not indifferent to all of this.* Notice, the Church is not indifferent to all of this, but this does not mean that she identifies herself with all of this. The Church assumes the liberating efforts of humankind and inserts these efforts into the universal plan of salvation which she proclaims. The Church knows that all the efforts to achieve salvation, and liberation, and the just demands of the workers, the *campesinos*, and the people who want to work will be ineffective and unsuccessful unless they become part of the great plan of salvation that the Church proclaims. The Church is the liberator par excellence because she proclaims the marvelous work of God.

Christ's salvation

The third and final point of my homily is the following: Christ's salvation. The great worker, Christ, has created a work that will endure for centuries, a work that will enable the work of all workers to endure if they incorporate themselves into the saving work of the Lord. There is no such thing as a small or insignificant work. All baptized persons, no matter how humble, whether that person is a *campesino* who earns a living with his machete or a doctor who earns his living with his scalpel in the operating room or a politician who works --- all these people participate in this plan of God if they make their work a service that seeks the integral salvation of humankind.

This is what the Church preaches. It is for this reason that the Church does not take sides with any liberating force of the earth. The Church cannot identify herself with the Popular Revolutionary Bloc, nor with FAPU³, nor with the Christian Democratic Party nor with PCN⁴ nor with ORDEN (Nationalist Democratic Organization). The Church cannot identify herself with any of these organizations. But the Church does speak to these organizations and tells them: *Courage in your efforts to establish a true liberation!* She also tells these organizations *That action is sinful!* when they abuse their power or want to lead the political institutions along distorted paths or when groups of people want to use their money to exploit other human beings. The Church is free to be able to preach to one party or another, to one group or another, to one class of people or another. The Church, with no affiliation with any party, is autonomous and able to speak the same words that Paul VI spoke: *The Church strives always to insert the Christian struggle for liberation into the universal plan of salvation which she herself proclaims* (u). The salvation that the Church proclaims is the salvation that Philip proclaimed to the people of Samaria; it is the salvation that Saint Peter writes about in his letter that we listened to today; it is the salvation that Saint John, in his gospel, preaches to the world today.

What kind of liberation are we speaking about? Jesus speaks about this very clearly when he says this morning: *the world cannot accept this spirit because it neither sees nor knows it* (v). Here Saint John is speaking about the world of sin. Thus the Church will always have conflicts with the world because she preaches a liberation from sin. This is the Church's plan. Many times the Church will not sit well with either side. Those who flatter the Church thinking that the Church is on their side may very well hear the Church say on some occasion: *No! You are a sinner and I am not with you!* Liberation from sin.

The Church would not be the Church of the gospel if she took sides with one social class and did not denounce their sins. The Church would not give an authentic gospel witness if she allowed herself to be manipulated by some group of persons who side with the poor but teach these poor people the ways of violence and sin. The Church promotes the human person through love. The Church is love even though people may fail to understand this. But here we are speaking about a love that is strong, a love that like the love of just parents corrects their children because they love them and do not want to see them fall into sin. As a result, the Church is often treated as though she had betrayed some friendship. Yet the truth of the matter is that the Church must speak the truth even to her most beloved friends. This is the meaning of love: to snatch people from the clutches of sin in order to set them on the road of conversion to God. Anything else would not be true love.

Finally, I remind you about this beautiful revelation of Christ: *You are in me, I am in the Father and the Father and you are in me* (w). This is true unity. Therefore, the Church must reflect this unity and communion. When we give scandal because of our disunity, the Church must ask for forgiveness because in those situations the Church does not preach the truth. The disunity of the Church is very sad my sisters and brothers and this lack of unity is a sign that goes against the teaching of Jesus. We are not the true Church when we present ourselves as divided. We must see these divisions as a crisis that can be overcome through service and love.

Yes, my brothers and sisters, this is the Church, the work of Christ, the great worker, who presents himself in this Church and shares with us grace and the truth. In the first reading (x),

when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the Word of God, the authority of the Church, Peter and John, went to Samaria to pray and impose hands so that the people might receive the Holy Spirit. We said that the Spirit is the energy of Christ and Christ shared this energy with the Church who in turn administers this energy in her communion, her sacraments, her liturgical life and in her faith. Therefore, my sisters and brothers, at this time as we meditate on the Word of God, you and I are being filled by the Holy Spirit. As the communities reflect on this Word, you know who they are like? They are like those high tension wires that are carrying electrical energy from the dynamos created by the powerful engines in Lempa that convert this power into energy that is used by the entire Republic. For us as Christians, the great dynamo is the Holy Spirit who has been given to us by Christ. Through his Spirit, Christ lives in the Church. The pastoral ministers, the grassroots communities, Christianity itself, when connected to this dynamo, transmit the Spirit of God to every citizen.

Therefore, my sisters and brothers, what can we do at this moment in the history of our nation? It is very easy to tell you this. Let us accept the Spirit that Christ has given us. Let each Christian attempt to be that depository of the Spirit that Christ gave when he said to his disciples: *I will not leave you orphans (y). I give you my dynamism, my truth, my unity and my love. Because you love me, they will know that you are my disciples and they will know that you love me because you will keep my commandments (z).* My sisters and brothers, any form of Christianity in El Salvador that does not keep the commandments of God is not an authentic Christianity. Therefore I extend to all of you an invitation to conversion. May all those homes that have not received the blessing of the sacrament of matrimony come and receive this sacrament for in this sacrament is the presence of the Spirit and by receiving this sacrament you show your love for God's commandment. May all those who kill and steal cease these actions for you are disobeying the law of the Lord who tells us not to kill or steal (a2). May all of our institutions become true instruments of the law of God. We would not need to change structures if everything that was done in these structures was done in fulfillment of Jesus' word. To love Jesus is to fulfill his law.

As we approach the feast of Pentecost, let us promise our Lord Jesus Christ that when the Spirit comes in fifteen days he will not find hearts that are closed to the laws of God or families that have not received the Lord's blessing. May it be said in all parts of our country that we love Christ because we attempt to fulfill his commandments. Let us stand and proclaim our Creed. We believe in one God....

¹ Reference to the sonnet *La Cruz de Mayo*. See A. Espino, *Jicaras tristes*, San Salvador, 2001, p. 63.

² Hymn for Vespers on the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

³ Frente de Acción Popular Unificada (FAPU) brought together various popular organizations.

⁴ El Partido de Conciliación Nacional (PCN) was, at that time, the party of the government.

Margin References (a) Lv 20,1-5: (b) PP 41: (c) Ac 2,37: (d) Lk 1,38: (e) Jn 5,17: (f) Ac 8,5: (g) 1P 3,18: (h) Jn 14,16: (i) Mk 6,2-3: (j) GS 32: (k) 1P 2,15-16: (l) Jn 14,17: (m) 1P 3,15: (n) Jn 14,16-17a: (o) Jn 14,18-20: (p) Jn 14,21: (q) Mt 7,3: (r) Jn 14,15: (s) Jn 14,21: (t) EN 38: (u) EN 38: (v) Jn 14,16: (w) Jn 14,20: (x) Ac 8,14-15: (y) Jn 14,18: (z) Jn 14,15: (a2) Ex 20,13,15.