

## **68**

# **IN HER WEAKNESS THE CHURCH LEANS ON CHRIST**

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

*Isaiah 58:7-10*  
*1 Corinthians 2:1-5*  
*Matthew 5:13-16*

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

After this Sunday the liturgical year interrupts what is called 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 of Ordinary Time, and they will be continued after Pentecost when we will celebrate the Sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time.

Why this interruption? Because we are now going to enter into the powerful season of Lent. This Wednesday is Ash Wednesday, the beginning of the great spiritual retreat of the church called Lent. During forty days we imitate Jesus who fasted for forty days in the desert in preparation for his public ministry. The church invites us during this season to feel that we are a vital part of Christ. She calls us to penance and to interior renewal of our souls, our hearts, our lives. Since next Wednesday is a workday, I urge you now to find a church where you can be sure to participate in this beautiful ceremony of the ashes.

Here in the cathedral I will have the opportunity to celebrate Mass at 7:00 o'clock in the morning so that the ashes blessed during the first Mass are available for all the people who will come throughout the day. This is the custom that is followed in all the churches so that Catholics who participate in these celebrations can humbly bow their foreheads before God and remember the great principle of life: «Remember you are dust»—or ashes, thus Ash Wednesday receives its name—«and unto dust or ashes you shall return». But while the body tends toward the tomb, the interior life of people must become stronger. Lent is not only an invitation to remember death; it above all reminds us that we must renew ourselves to be light, salt, and brightness in the world.

Ash Wednesday, then, has great importance in the liturgical year. Let us try to participate in Mass with a sense of solemnly inaugurating Lent and so prepare ourselves for the Paschal celebration, the death and resurrection of Christ in Holy Week. After that the Easter joy is prolonged for fifty days, until we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit, won for us through the painful death and the resurrection of the Lord. After we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit, we then return to the celebration of Ordinary Time in order to complete the

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<sup>1</sup> The greeting and first words were not registered on the tape of the homily.

thirty-four weeks that will bring us again to the beginning of another year: Advent and preparation for Christmas.

Notice the beauty and the effectiveness of these seasons, for the church is an expert in the spiritual life. The liturgical year is like a course given at a great worldwide university so that, as the Vatican Council says, «all people can celebrate the mysteries of salvation and become filled with saving grace» (SC 102). It is not just recalling the past; it is making present the mystery that saves the world until the final consummation. Each liturgical year makes present to us this mystery of Christ as it unfolds above all in our Sunday Mass.

This Sunday, sisters and brothers, comes just after February 2, the feast of Candlemas, when we celebrate the presentation of the child Jesus in the temple forty days after his birth (Luke 2:22-24). The Holy Family was careful to fulfill the laws of Moses regarding the circumcision of the first male child and the purification of his mother who, 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 has ordained. 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 very first image of the Virgin that our people venerated. This image brought here by the Spaniards was venerated under the title of «The Presentation», and people had great confidence in this Virgin. At this time when our country needs much protection from heaven, let us not forget this Virgin of Candlemas who accompanies us in our history as the Virgin of the Presentation—they are the same.

On this Sunday when Christ speaks to us about the light that every Christian should be, we do well to reflect in our homily on this symbol of light and this feast of Candlemas which is so popular among us. Many people, however, go to the shrines of the Virgin of Candlemas without understanding the great significance of the lighted candles they hold in their hands. This gesture gives substance to the words of Jesus: you Christians are bright lights that shine before the eyes of the world so that your example and your brilliance reveal the glory of God to the world (Matt 5:16).

Along with the feasts of the liturgical year, sisters and brothers, there are a number of more popular or traditional feasts which we should celebrate by incorporating them into the liturgical year according to the spirit of the Council (SC 103). For example, next Saturday, February 11, is the feast of our lovely Lady of Lourdes, who has here among us some beautiful sites of veneration, such as the parish of Lourdes in Colón. I want to invite you especially to the celebration in the grotto at Lourdes College. There the superior and the Carmelite sisters will celebrate with other Salvadoran communities the seventy-fifth anniversary of their founding. The principal celebration will take place at the grotto of the school, located on the road to San Marcos, at 4:00 o'clock in the afternoon, when those who are sick will assemble. The organizers of this event therefore call upon the hospitals and the families who have some member who is ill to bring them if possible so that they can participate in the Mass.

As at Lourdes in France, we will bless the sick and others who so desire; we will also give them the anointing of the sick, which is not a sacrament that should make the infirm person lose hope of recovery. The anointing of the sick is no longer called extreme unction as it was before; the anointing of the sick signifies the consecration of ailing persons so that by being united to Christ crucified they become truly what Christ desires of every sick person and of everyone who suffers: a suffering member of his passion to save the world. The sick are thus

invited to consecrate their pain and their illness through the intercession of the most pure Virgin of Lourdes for the redemption of the world. My dear sisters and brothers who are ill, perhaps many of you are listening to me on your radios. I want you to know that you are not useless; you are the most valuable part of humankind, for on your sickbeds with your pain and physical incapacities you are members of Christ crucified who saved the world precisely by suffering death on the cross.

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

This past week on February 2, sisters and brothers, I was unable to be with you. The Guadalupana Sisters invited me to travel to Mexico to celebrate the centennial anniversary of their founding. However, the bishop never travels alone; he always takes his whole diocese with him. Together with you I expressed the gratitude of the diocese to this congregation that from the time of Bishop Belloso y Sánchez has ministered here. At the present time these sisters follow the modern goals of the church and are involved in works of development in the parish school of San Luis in Cuscatancingo, where they have their academy for *campesinos*. Next Saturday, the feast of our Lady of Lourdes, the Guadalupana Sisters will also begin their pastoral ministry in the town of Arcatao. It is therefore a duty of this diocese to give thanks to this congregation. The centennial celebration was presided over by the cardinal of Mexico, and he was joined by about a hundred priests and fourteen bishops, who also are grateful to this congregation for their ministry in their various dioceses.

At the same time that I was thanking the Virgin of Guadalupe, I also prayed hard for the whole diocese, for the priests, the religious, the laity. I bring back to you, sisters and brothers, many expressions of support and sympathy from priests, theologians, and other thoughtful people who see in our archdiocese a marvelous revelation of the Spirit of God. When one travels beyond the boundaries of one's diocese, one sees new perspectives that were never before imagined. I return more grateful to the Lord, and I urge you to intensify your Christian commitment. Without realizing it, sisters and brothers of the Archdiocese of San Salvador, we are becoming a spectacle; people are observing us. One theologian told me, «All of you in San Salvador are a Christian inspiration for many dioceses in Latin America and even in Europe—they follow with great interest what is going on there».

I was pleasantly surprised that these modest homilies are also being heard there in Mexico and other places on our continent—they are sent as tape recordings. Praised be God! I don't tell you this out of vanity but so that we will be faithful to the voice of the Spirit who continually inspires the life of our church. The Gospel truth that «no one is a prophet in his own country» (John 4:44) is also fulfilled here, where instead of admiration we encounter slander, misunderstanding, and criticism. We admit that every human effort is imperfect, but I believe that the most important things, sisters and brothers, are the positive values of this church that relies on her faith, her Gospel, and her sincere following of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I did not want to speak about this here, but you'll read about it in the newspaper. My duty of solidarity with you obliges me to thank the Lord for the honor to be paid me by Georgetown University. Here in the cathedral on February 14 at 7:00 o'clock at night, they are going to give me an honorary doctorate of humanities. As I explain to you in *Orientación*<sup>2</sup>, if this were some personal honor, I would not presume to accept it. But because of its noble origins

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<sup>2</sup> «Letter of Archbishop Oscar A. Romero» in *Orientación* (5 February 1978).

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.

Also, sisters and brothers, we cannot forget in our reflections this morning our fraternal love and concern for our sister republic of Nicaragua. Let us understand this situation and offer very special prayers for Nicaragua. I don't rely on my own words here, but the document of the bishops of Nicaragua appears there in *Orientación*<sup>3</sup>. It is a New Year's message in which they denounce the many forms of injustice and violence the people of Nicaragua are suffering. I want to cite some words from the encyclical *Populorum Progressio* of Pope Paul VI that will throw light on these events and help us learn a lesson. The events of history offer lessons for everyone. These words were written a long time ago, and if more attention had been paid to them, our sister republic would not now be bathed in blood. Nor would there be a bloodbath here in El Salvador. We do not want this; we do not want violence; and above all we do not want civil war. That is why we cry out and repeat what the pope was saying many years ago. Hopefully we will heed his words in time.

*Populorum Progressio* states in paragraph 30: «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» (PP 30). We have always said that the cause of our distress, the origins of terrorism, and the source of this bloodshed are to be found there in social injustice. The pope is saying the same thing in this encyclical.

Even more serious are the words that follow, in paragraph 31, and I invite you all to reflect on them. These documents of the church should be well known to Catholics so that no one goes about saying that I'm promoting terrorism or the other crazy things they talk about. It is the pope who has written these words: «Everyone knows 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»—thus there is an exception, an extreme case in which tyranny is violently trampling on the common good of the country—«engender new injustices, introduce new inequities, and bring new disasters. The evil situation that exists, and it surely is evil, may be dealt with in such a way that an even worse situation results» (PP 31).

I believe the pope's thought is very clear. The church's doctrine admits rebellion as a last resort in the same way that war is a last resort in defense of what is good or that killing another to defend oneself is a last resort. But we must be sure that the rebellion is not a greater evil than the good that is sought. This is a very difficult balance, but it belongs to the church's doctrine as explained by the pope in the following paragraph: «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,

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<sup>3</sup> EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE OF NICARAGUA, *Message to the People of God for the New Year 1978* (6 January 1978).

particularly those who can do most by reason of their education, their office, or their authority» (PP 32).

Accordingly, sisters and brothers, before arriving at violent revolution or a bloody fratricidal struggle, it is better to put in place some peaceful means. There is still time for all of us, especially those who by their education or their situation have more influence in legal matters and in society, to bring about the necessary changes. Profound and courageous change is urgently needed so that we don't end up weeping later because we failed to act in time, 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 commend to your prayers these communities that are part of the archdiocesan family. Let us love one another as sisters and brothers.

Likewise, I send my greetings and my thanks to the wonderful community of Jardín in Tejutla, where last Sunday I experienced surroundings that were worthy of the gospel passage of the Sermon of the Mount. What beautiful mountains and hills are to be seen there in the north, and what a wonderful reception these people of noble heart give to the word of God! I commend the lay people, some of them professionals, who have been collaborating in the evangelization of Jardín.

Finally, sisters and brothers, I want to commend to your prayers in this Mass two intentions I have. The first is for Mrs. Chiurato whose whereabouts continue to remain a mystery, and the second is for the eternal rest of José Luis Martínez who died on February 5, 1975.

This is the social setting, sisters and brothers, that touches our hearts, our history, our perils, our hopes, our personal problems, and so many other family matters. Here is where we must look to the word of God to shed light on these realities. If the word of God is only a theoretical reflection unrelated to our realities, even the painful ones, then it is not a word that enlightens us. In this homily especially I want to present the church that finds support in Christ for her weakness. That could be the title for today's reflection: «In Her Weakness the Church Leans on Christ».

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

Since we are about to interrupt the Ordinary Time of the liturgical year, a time of routine and monotony, let us sincerely seek Christian renewal as individuals, as families, and as a society. For today's reflection, sisters and brothers, I would like us to keep in mind a precious passage from the Sermon on the Mount, a discourse of Jesus which will continue to provide themes during the Sundays of Ordinary Time. Immediately after Christ proclaimed the Beatitudes that we heard last Sunday, he addresses us directly as Christians and tells us, «You must be the light of the world. One does not light a lamp and then hide it under the table, but rather one puts it where it will illuminate the whole house. You are like an illuminated city, a city on the mountain that cannot be hidden. You are the salt of the earth. Salt is good for giving flavor, but when salt loses its taste, what good is it?» (Matt 5:13-15).

What good is the church or any Christian when their preaching and their example become flattery and fawning and a desire to be accepted by the world? Tasteless salt! Extinguished light! How easy it is to be accepted by the world, but how ineffective is a snuffed-out lamp! What good is it? The church needs each one of us and all of us together. Every Christian must be a torch, and all Christians together must be like that city on the mountain.

That is why I was deeply moved when they told me there in Mexico that our church is like that city, an inspiration for many churches on this continent and even in Europe. Rather than become proud, let us simply feel the responsibility to honor this expectation of the world with regard to our church. May every Christian take seriously this matter of personal witness. I give thanks to the Lord because in these difficult times for our archdiocese many personal testimonies have arisen. They were telling me there in Mexico at a novitiate, «We've never had so many vocations from El Salvador as we had this past year». I've heard the same from women's congregations. And how many wonderful vocations we have in the seminary here, where the students are now on retreat as they begin another academic year! A medical student told me there in Aguilares, «I'm not satisfied with this career that I first embraced with enthusiasm, so I've asked to enter a novitiate. I prefer to be a priest!»

My sisters and brothers, it's not that other professions are inferior to the priesthood. Every vocation is valuable because that is where God wants a person to be. This is the call I make to you now, sisters and brothers, in the name of Christ: may all of you become light in your own occupation. My job as bishop is my vocation. The job of my brother priests in the towns and parishes is their vocation, their place. The job of the women religious in their schools, in their hospitals, in their missions—that is their vocation. And you also have a vocation, my dear lay people: whether doctor, lawyer, engineer, employee, market vendor, hauler of produce, laborer, carpenter—all of you must live your own special vocation.

How beautiful life would be if each one of us were proud of our occupation and didn't use it just to possess more—that is selfishness—but simply to be light to the world! How beautiful society would be if people's goal was not to enrich themselves and possess more! As we've said here before, this is the most eloquent expression of moral underdevelopment: greed, the desire to possess, the frenzy of power, idolatry. People shine brightest when they are the Lord's light, when they make their work a way of serving humanity, when they are lamps that are consumed as they give out light.

As community and as church, sisters and brothers, let us become ever more united in the archdiocese. I am very grateful to you, dear priests, for bearing witness to your unity with your bishop. It's a shame that not everyone wants that! I am also grateful to the religious women for their expressions of solidarity with this sign of unity which is the bishop. The communities, the parishes, the base communities, and all true Catholics are realizing this unity of the illuminated city on the mountain. May we be ever more worthy of the precious gifts that the Lord has given us, and may we fulfill what the Council says 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» (LG 8). Those consolations you yourselves provide to the extent that we all become more Christian. I pretend to nothing, sisters and brothers, except being a Christian bishop who is fulfilling his role as a sign of unity. I am worth no more than anyone else; I am simply a sign of this unity. Those who accept me as a sign build up the unity of the church; those who reject me as a sign reject the unity of the church. They destroy the unity and extinguish this light; they become tasteless salt.

## **Good works are the church's splendor**

My second thought is this, sisters and brothers: good works are the church's splendor. But notice how today's readings insist on good works for the sake 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 flesh» (Isa 58:7). I am the one who is the beggar. It is my own flesh that is hungry, and so I provide food. The person who comes to you freezing and looking for shelter is your own flesh, and so I provide protection. Feel deeply this fraternity; feel deeply this identity. I don't mean just with yourself but above all with Christ. «Everything you do for that needy person, you do for me» (Matt 25:40).

How can the church not be pained by a civilization of selfishness, this civilization of cruel inequalities where the poor, the helpless, the hungry, the naked, the homeless must exist as if they were not persons, were not our brothers and sisters! We have said before, sisters and brothers, that we are not defending laziness or idleness. Those who do not work, says the Bible, should not eat (2 Thess 3:10). But we are dealing with situations that have become all too common among us, as if there were different classes of human beings: the rich and the poor. But we are all one and the same flesh! We have the same origin and the same destiny! Christ has loved all of us and identified with all of us!

Let us live doing good works. What does the prophet say? «When you do all this, 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» (Isa 58:8). This is the glory that follows the church and those who live with justice and charity. That is why, sisters and brothers, every one of us in this archdiocese must be enkindled with justice, freedom, equality, and defense of human rights, viewing them all in the light of the faith. Let us not forget that it is in our searching that the Lord's light will break forth in our being. It's not a question of doing good like some philanthropists. There are many groups that do good, but they do so in order to have their names in the newspapers or to have a plaque erected declaring them great benefactors. There are many who do good seeking the applause of the world. In calling everyone to live with justice and love, what the church seeks is the good of those who act rightly, because the benefactors benefit as much as the beneficiaries.

«Then you shall call and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help and he will say, Here I am!» (Isa 58:9). What more do we want, sisters and brothers, than to enjoy God's nearness? The word of God today gives us one rule by which to judge whether God is near us or far away: God is near all those who are concerned for the hungry, the naked, the poor, the disappeared, the tortured, the imprisoned. All those who draw close to suffering flesh have God close at hand. «Cry for help, and he will hear you». Religion does not consist in a lot of praying. Religion consists in this guarantee of having God close to me because I lend a hand to my sisters and brothers. The guarantee of my prayer is not saying a lot of words. The guarantee of my prayer is something very simple: how do I treat the poor? Because that is where God is. The degree to which we approach the poor and how we approach them—whether with love or with scorn—determines how we approach God. What we do to the poor, we do also to God. The way we look at them is the way we look at God. God has so desired to be identified with them that the merits of each one of us and of our society will be measured by the way we treat the needy and the poor.

Beloved poor people, dear outcasts, dear friends who lack housing and food, your very dignity demands your advancement. It is a shame that often you poor folk do not respect yourselves as you ought and that you try to drown—in drink, in vices, in disorder—the dignity that reveals God’s light and presence on earth. We do not praise poverty for poverty’s sake. We praise it as a sign and sacrament of God in the world. A sacrament must be respected because it is a sign of God, and therefore the poor must be respected and supported. They must be able to work to the extent that their economic and social efforts make possible.

Do not fall asleep. The church and religion do not want to be the opium of the people. That is why the church experiences conflicts: she is trying to develop humankind, and so she tells the poor, «You are equal. You have the same rights as all your sisters and brothers». The church finds herself in conflict because she stirs people to stop being a sleeping mass and to become creators of the country’s destiny. That is why the church’s promotion of development is maliciously confused with subversive ideas and other forms of slander. Yet the church seeks what the prophet Isaiah sought; she proclaims the development of the human person because she knows that God is hidden in each person. Respect for every person, even the most poor and indigent person, is respectful devotion to our God; it is almost a form of adoring our God.

### **The weakness of the church finds sublime support in Christ**

Finally, sisters and brothers, my third thought is the following: the church’s weakness, the church’s poverty, and the church’s human limitations find their sublime support in Christ our Lord. Here I focus on the reading from Saint Paul, whose context I’ve already explained. Paul is writing to the community in Corinth, where he spent more than a year working. He gets news that the community is forgetting its divine call and seeking after worldly wisdom; many Christians are boasting of following Apollo, the great preacher from Alexandria; the Greeks are scandalized by the cross of Christ; the Jewish converts also see the cross as madness and seek support from worldly things such as money, politics, and human honors. What an easy temptation this is, brothers and sisters!

When persecutions against the church ended and a climate of goodwill prevailed, this was celebrated by historians. Preparing my homily for the feast of Saint Sebastian, I was reading how one historian—I think it was Eusebius<sup>4</sup>—said that after the persecution the emperor showed his favor to Christians, but they didn’t know how to take advantage of it. Instead, they spent their time quarrelling with one another and looking for personal advantage. I wonder if this wasn’t due precisely to the benefits the Christians enjoyed. In Mexico a very thoughtful priest told me, «I’m afraid for Mexico because today the church is too well off. What we have today is more than what they took away from us when the revolution began. I am fearful that the church is too comfortable and is forgetting her transcendent character».

That is what Saint Paul is talking about in his letter to the Corinthians. What a wonderful Magna Carta this is for every preacher! How I would love to say to you, dear 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» (1 Cor 2:1-2). My sisters and brothers, I

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<sup>4</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea in his *Ecclesiastical History* reflects on the peace the Roman Emperor Constantine gave to the church. Perhaps Archbishop Romero is alluding to a letter from the emperor on the divisions between the bishops. See *Ecclesiastical History*, X,5,21.



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» (1 Cor 2:3). God knows how hard it was for me to come here to the capital! How timid I have felt standing before you! I could not have done it if it were not for the support that you as church have given me. You have made your bishop a sign of Christianity. It is you, sisters and brothers, who are the architects of this church.

«In the speeches and the sermons 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» (1 Cor 2:4). This will be my greatest boast. Sometimes people tell me, «I have returned to the church. I had lost the faith, but now I feel faith reborn in my heart». When I hear this, I feel that it has nothing to do with my words or my attitude or anything about me; rather, it is the force of the Spirit, the power of God, the only One who can reach the heart of each of you.

What is my word worth? 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 traverse. Blessed is the preacher who does not put his trust in the noise of his own words even when they come wrapped in great human wisdom. My dear companions and brother priests, let us take seriously this passage from today's reading. Let us not place our trust in the powers of earth. I have never tolerated or consented to having the proclamation of the Gospel wrapped in the language of revolution. When people have accused some priest of preaching revolution, I have asked for proof, concrete cases. That is the only way we can proceed. Many times these accusations are simply slanderous; the information comes from third parties or persons with vested interests. When I've spoken with the accused priest to see how he is thinking, I discover that his language is simply the wisdom of Christ, for Christ also knew how to cry out against injustices and never tolerated maltreatment of the poor and the needy.

That is why our church must be very careful, especially the base communities and the reflection groups. When they reflect on the Bible and the word of the Lord, they should seek only the wisdom of the crucified Christ and not the power of politics or wealth. How many persons have been seduced and made into insipid salt because they sought the flimsy support of the powers of the world! But neither can we go to the other extreme: the response of arms and violence is not Christian language.

That is why we heard today from *Populorum Progressio* that we must use this time to avoid further bloodshed. We must undertake bold transformations that suppose the conversion of our hearts from earthly idols to worshiping the one and only God, whom we all must love and serve. Viewing the goods of earth from God's perspective, we must use them to create a civilization of love, a civilization of the children of God.

My sisters and brothers, let us live intensely as church, as a poor church that seeks its support in Christ. To help us move beyond mere words, the Eucharist is now prepared on the altar. Let us celebrate this Mass in intimate communion with our Lord Jesus Christ. May each and every person who is participating in this reflection feel the depths of their Christianity awaken within them so that they hear Christ tell them, «Be light of the world! Be salt of the earth!» And with Paul let us all respond, «Lord, may I never glory in anything except your cross, and may the wisdom I share with my sisters and brothers be nothing more than Jesus Christ and him crucified» (1 Cor 2:1-2). Let it be so.