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THE CHURCH: THE VINEYARD OF THE LORD

**Twenty-seventh Sunday of Ordinary Time
8 October 1978**

Isaiah 5:1-7

Philippians 4:6-9

Matthew 21:33-43

My sisters and brothers, I would prefer to reflect in silence on these beautiful readings that describe in the language of love the sad history of God's love for us and the disdain we have shown for his love. «Let me sing», says the prophet Isaiah, «let me sing a song of love for a vineyard» (Isa 5:1). Today we should feel charmed by that love song, but not as if it were a poem for someone else. Rather, we should feel that we are all protagonists in that love song between God and the whole of humanity, which includes each one of us.

I am going to title today's homily, «The Church: the Vineyard of the Lord», and as usual I'm going to present three thoughts: first, the Lord planted the church in the world as a vineyard; second, this vineyard which is the church reflects the crises of God's kingdom; but third, the victory of Christ will be won through the church.

In light of these thoughts, we're going to see whether our church in the archdiocese is truly being the vineyard that the Lord planted. From that vineyard in the midst of the world's continuing crisis, we will also shed light on the historical reality around us because that is the only way we can come to know the authentic message that God wants to communicate through this vineyard church.

The Lord planted the church as a vineyard in the world

In the first place, then, the Lord planted his church as a vineyard. It's true that in Isaiah's time the church of Christ did not yet exist, but as we just said in the responsorial psalm, the vineyard represents the people of Israel (Ps 80:9), the favored people in whom God was preparing, announcing, and perfecting his pedagogy until the day arrived when Christ founded a church. This church of ours, this multitude in the cathedral, all those baptized Christians who gather together today around their altars—they are the Israel of God; they are the new people that the Lord has planted.

This Israel is transferred to the New Testament as the church of Christ, and this church has two elements that are very helpful to keep in mind: first, the human element or what we could call the soil in which the vineyard is planted; and second, as in every vineyard, the Christian sprout. The soil in which the vineyard is planted is humanity, ourselves; it was our ancestors; it was Israel and the descendants of Abraham; it is every nation. God created the world, and in this world he created the human race with its marvelous capacity to receive and nourish that Christian sprout.

But before being Christian, society must first be human. And here we do well to consider the second reading from Saint Paul where he speaks to us precisely of human values, «Sisters and brothers, keep in mind all that is true, noble, just, pure, gracious, and worthy of praise» (Phil 4:8). We are past the time, dear sisters and brothers, for insisting on that old dichotomy between the created and the redeemed. The Word of God who became flesh to redeem the world and to make the world Christian is the same Word who before taking on flesh was spoken by God as the Word through whom all things were made (John 1:3). That is to say, before planting that sprout of Christ, God created a humanity capable of receiving all the divine wisdom that that sprout planted in humanity would need.

It is true that a theological distinction is made between nature and grace and that not all truth and all goodness are supernatural. But it is also true that all that is supernatural, all that is to be rewarded with eternity, all that is noble, all that is holy in human beings must first have a natural basis. In theology we say that grace does not destroy nature, but rather grace supposes nature. That is why a criminal, a liar, or a traitor who is hardly even human cannot enter the kingdom of heaven; such a person must first be converted and be truly human. Christianity cannot coexist with hypocrisy.

The Second Vatican Council speaks beautifully about the people of God when making reference to non-Christians, to those not baptized, to that vast world we call missionary territory or pagan lands. In *Lumen Gentium* 16, the Council uses very respectful words: «Whatever good or truth is found among them is considered by the church to be a preparation for the Gospel and given by him who enlightens all men and women so that they may at last have life» (LG 16). Behold, the beautiful day of Christianity is already dawning on those nations to which missionaries travel with the sprout of Christianity—why, they find the people already prepared to receive the Gospel! Remember that wonderful story of the time Saint Paul received a message from a pagan people: «Come and help us» (Acts 16:9-10). Paul felt that this was the voice of the Spirit crying out from paganism, from the Gentiles.

How much goodness, sisters and brothers, how much truth, how much honesty there is there beyond our Christian borders! Let us respect this because often we think that we're the best there is in the world just because we're in the church. Who knows! Who knows whether those of us in the church are in fact less good, less noble, and less human than those outside the church who are already prepared for the Gospel and are waiting with a nobility that is truly worthy of receiving Christianity? The Gospel will then reach that fertile earth Saint Paul speaks of, «all that is good, all that is noble, pure, gracious, and just» (Phil 4:8). None of this is wasted, sisters and brothers. All of this is preparation for the Gospel, and that's why we should not be fanatics! Fanaticism among Christians has caused much damage. It is like the arrogance of the elder son who points to the prodigal and says, «That one is bad. I am good» (Luke 15:25-30). In reality, the one who was good was the prodigal son who returned repentant to give his father his rueful love; it was not the brother who was smug in his phony, hypocritical fidelity.

The Christian sprout has been movingly defined in the church's recent documents. I still remember the words of Paul VI, that marvelous man of whom it's been said that history will love him more than his contemporaries did. We still don't appreciate the treasures of ecclesiology that Paul VI has left us. In his first encyclical he asks, «What does baptism do?» (ES 18). Baptism is the moment when the Christian sprout is planted in what Tertullian called the

«naturally Christian soul»¹, in order to make the soul a supernatural vineyard of God. Every person is a natural Christian. In every person there is a seed of nobility, but Christianity does not spring from that. The sprout is called supernatural because it descends upon nature and is beyond our natural capacities. That is why we should respect that precious moment of baptism which makes a child of the flesh a vineyard of God. The child may perhaps be born of a married couple who are noble, loyal, and good, but it is still a child of the flesh. It is only when the child is baptized that the hand of God plants the sprout of Christianity, Christ, in the tiny heart of the child. Paul VI defines that moment of baptism with these words: «It confers new life that has lost none of what is human except the sad heritage of original sin; it is a new life that is capable of expressing fully all that is human and of producing fruits of the richest and purest sort» (ES 18).

What a beautiful reality! Christianity does not come to take away from us anything that is human! Those who think that the church comes with subversive ideas or with political or social rivalries are wrong, as are those who support the church only in her human values. They are all forgetting that hymn that tells the story of how the magi come to Herod asking him where Christ has been born: «Where has God planted the sprout that will soon spring forth into eternal life for humanity?» Herod grows envious of that new king, but the church sings to him, «Herod, have no fear, for the One coming to give us eternal kingdoms comes not to take away temporal powers»². This is Christianity, which does not enter into rivalry with the powers of earth. Rather, it comes to give eternal seeds to those powers and all those who want that sprout to be sown in their hearts. Christianity is the seed of new life; it creates new humans and new societies. The democratic systems will not change, but if they are truly Christian, then those who live in them will not make a farce of democracy. Rather, they will make it a channel for enlivening society with God's life; they will open up channels that express freedom and dignity and that exalt all that is noble and good in the human race and in Salvadoran society.

It is very perverse and very naïve to repress the church and try to prevent her from sowing her Christian sprout. In the twilight of his life, Paul VI wrote with great maturity about evangelization and the mission of the church in the world. In number 19 of *Evangelii Nuntiandi* he says that the goal of evangelization is «affecting and as it were upsetting, through the power of the Gospel, those criteria of judgment, crucial values, points of interest, lines of thought of humankind ... that are in contradiction to the word of God and the plan of salvation» (ES 19). For this reason, he says, we should not evangelize «in a purely ornamental way, as it were, by applying a thin veneer» over rottenness that remains hidden (ES 20). Unfortunately, that is the kind of evangelization done by many people who want to stay on good terms with both Christ and the devil of the world. Those who are still perverse cannot be evangelized. Those who live for themselves alone cannot be called to baptism. Evangelizing means commitment. It means dedicating to God's service all those human qualities that by natural generation we receive from our parents, as well as all that culture we've inherited as the soul, the image, and the sentiment of our country. Nothing can be more patriotic than Christianity.

Thus we have the words of Bishop Tihamer Toth of Hungary, poor Hungary that has so often been trod underfoot by foreign tyrants. He declared, «When the national hymn cannot be sung in public, we will still be singing it in the churches. With patriotic freedom we will sing the hymn of freedom of our homeland». It is here, sisters and brothers, in the Christian atmosphere

¹ TERTULLIAN, *Apologeticum*, 17,6: PL 1, 377.

² *Liturgy of the Hours*, hymn for vespers on the feast of the Epiphany.

of our churches, in our reflections on the word, in the base communities—it is here that true patriotism is being preached. To persecute this is to destroy the country. To persecute Christianity is to commit suicide.

In light of today's word, then, what is the fruit of this vineyard that the hand of the Lord has planted in our land? By happy coincidence, sisters and brothers, let us pay due honor as we prepare to celebrate soon the twelfth of October, the day we call «the Day of the Race». Let us celebrate it with a sense of gratitude for the missionaries who brought the Christian sprout to our America. There was already great nobility among our indigenous peoples. What was human here was good even though it was born of the flesh, a purely natural inheritance. And following Paul's example, the missionaries of five centuries ago could have said about the American Indians, «Take into account all that is noble, just, pure, gracious, and worthy of praise» (Phil 4:8). It is a shame that the evangelization of that time did not have the same clear ideas that the church's evangelization has today! Shameful also is that alliance of evangelization with the sword and with arms for the purpose of imposing the cross as the sign of Christianity by military force! That's not the way to convince a people; it is not by imposing a civilization from outside but rather by drawing on all that is noble in the people themselves. Thank God, pastoral ministry today is discovering all that was noble, holy, and good in our indigenous ancestors and that still runs through our veins. And this is still what the sprout of Christ needs in order to be planted in truly fertile earth.

That is why the church needs autonomy: so that she can preach what Christ commands her to preach and not conform to what others want her to preach. She is the sprout of God that plants her seeds of eternal life in this natural soil that we humans prepare for her to the extent that we make ourselves more noble and human.

Let us not forget, sisters and brothers, these two elements that are necessary to be a good Christian. Let us cultivate the natural elements such as the virtues of honesty, justice, and loyalty. All that makes for sincere friendship we have in common with pagans, those who are not Christians, because there is much that is good in our humanity. But as Christians let us also carefully cultivate the second element: what we were given by baptism and the sacraments, what Christ sowed in us. It is the life of grace; it is flight from sin; it is living in accord with the law of the Lord. Then, as Isaiah tells us, the fruits will be there. How sad are the prophet's words when he describes God weeping over the failure of his vineyard: «The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the people of Judah are his cherished plant. He looked for justice, and behold, laments!» (Isa 5:7). In the second reading Saint Paul also tells us what fruits we should hope for: the peace of God, virtue, and merit. «The God of peace will be with you» (Phil 4:9).

In other words, dear sisters and brothers, it is exactly what we have preached in a thousand different ways: we want peace, but not the peace of violence and of cemeteries, not peace imposed or extorted. We want peace that is the fruit of justice, peace that is the fruit of obedience to God, for God was expecting the righteousness and justice that his vineyard should have produced but got in return only murders. What we have of humanity and Christianity in El Salvador *should* have produced much peace, much right, much justice. How different our country would be if it were producing what God has planted here! It's sad to say, but God feels he has failed with certain societies, and I think that the passages from Isaiah and Saint Paul that we read today have become a very sad Salvadoran reality: «I looked for righteousness, and behold, murders! I looked for justice, and behold, laments!» (Isa 5:7).

We are not planting discord with these. We are simply crying out to the God who is weeping, to the God who hears the laments of his people because there is so much violence, to the God who feels the distress of his *campesinos* who cannot sleep in their homes because they must spend their nights in flight. God hears the wailing of the children who cry out for their parents who have disappeared: where are they? That is not what God was looking for! The Salvadoran homeland that we are now experiencing is not what should have been the fruit of the humanity and the Christianity that God sowed in our land.

This vineyard that is the church reflects the crises of God's kingdom.

The sprout of Christ might appear to be completely stunted if we did not also have in El Salvador, thank God, much that is good, as we will see. But first I want to focus on this second thought: God planted a vineyard which is his church. Our church is like a zone of encounter between God and humanity, between the earth that humans are preparing and the sprout that God is planting. That zone of encounter reflects the enormous crises of God's kingdom.

I want to remind you that during this whole year the basic readings on Sundays have been taken from the Gospel of Saint Matthew, the outline of which I've already explained to you. According to commentators, it is the gospel with the most orderly presentation of the great news that Christ brought to the world: the kingdom of God has arrived for all humankind. We now find ourselves in the gospel's final section, which describes that moment of crisis after Jesus entered Jerusalem and was confronted by the priests, the Pharisees, and the rulers of city. It was a turning point in history. At this moment in the Gospel of Saint Matthew the kingdom of God is in crisis, and this crisis is reflected in the parables of Christ. Today's parable is tremendous! The leaders of Israel mentioned in today's gospel were the high priests and the senators, which, translated into today's language, would be the bishops, the deputies, the government ministers and officials, the priests, the leaders of the people, the capitalist class, those who have the power of wealth—these are the ones with whom Christ was confronted in his own time, and they are also the ones who caused the conflict related in the parable.

A man ordered a vineyard to be planted, and he leased it out to others. At harvest time he sent for the produce, as was customary in Jesus' time. There arose a dispute between the owner and the vineyard workers, as was also customary then according to historians. It was what we might call a labor conflict, but it was so horrible that the workers killed the owner's messengers and even killed his son, who was understood to represent Christ. After telling this parable, Christ echoes the words of the prophet Isaiah: «Please judge between me and my vineyard. What more could I do? I was hoping it would give me grapes, but it produced only sour fruit. These are useless, bitter grapes that can't be eaten or used for anything. So much work for this!» (Isa 5:3-4). The vineyard of the parable actually produced fruit, but conflict soon ensued because the workers didn't want to give the owner the fruit of his vineyard and even killed his messengers. The messengers represent the prophets and others sent by God who protested the injustices of society. This is the crisis that the Gospel has had to endure throughout history: God plants a vineyard from which he expects to harvest fruits, but the only fruits he gathers are crimes, murders, and things he did not sow. Moreover, the unjust workers beat and kill his prophets and others he sends to them.

Saint Paul was a Jew but above all a Christian. In his letter to the Romans he analyzes this crisis, and several Sundays ago we had the chance to study this point in our homilies.

Reflecting on this crisis, Saint Paul says, «I have been sent to the Gentiles because you Jews, the Israel where God planted his vineyard, became unworthy and refused to obey God. You preferred the laws of Moses over faith in Christ. But we Christians realize that Moses and the laws of the Old Testament are now passed; there remains only what has been revealed in Christ. And that is why we turn now to the Gentile peoples. I am preaching now to the Gentiles, and their acceptance of Christ incites the envy of the Jews. When the Gentiles turn to Christ and the Jews are converted because they see us going to the foreign nations, then God will forgive them also» (Rom 9–11). There is a precious phrase in the letter to the Romans that prevents people from boasting about how the Christian sprout is a product of their own merits. Saint Paul says, «As a result of the disobedience of the Jews and the rebelliousness of the Gentiles (who at first refused to accept Christ but now accept him), all of us, both Jews and Gentiles, have been delivered up to sin so that God may be the redeemer of all humankind» (Rom 11:30–32). This is the plan of God. We humans should realize that we are sinners. The Jews, who were the chosen ones, the land where God planted his vineyard, despised their calling, and that's why the vineyard was extended to the Gentiles. Blessed be God! What says this cathedral filled with the faithful? Are you a vineyard whose branches are heavy with hope?

Paul then says that when the Jewish people reflect on the greatness they have rejected, they will be converted to Christ. And just as we Gentiles have had our sins forgiven and have had the Christian sprout sown in us, so also the Lord will forgive the Jews and sow in them also the Christian sprout. And so, dear sisters and brothers, that is how God's project deals with these crises of the church's history.

At this time in El Salvador, the church is in crisis. There are divisions; we aren't going to deny it. There are people who despise the pastoral line of the archdiocese. There are plenty of people who criticize as perverse the doctrine we are sowing. And when there is such a division, sisters and brothers, it is very dangerous to be rebellious like the Jews or disobedient like the Gentiles. We should instead embrace humility. That is what was required of the Jewish people, who were swollen with pride at being chosen by God, and it was also necessary for the disobedient Gentiles who worshiped false gods instead of adoring the true God. Both ignored the Christian sprout that our Lord Jesus Christ brought to us.

There is crisis in the heart of every Christian, and let me tell you, dear sisters and brothers, if at this moment there are any Christians in El Salvador who do not feel this crisis, then they have not reflected on the meaning of God's message and on what God has sown in the world. Many have already overcome the crisis and have committed themselves to God's kingdom. Many have overcome it in the opposite sense: they have settled down comfortably and find it easier to say, «The church is communist. Why follow it?» But some people are still in crisis; they don't know what to do. The blame lies neither with God nor with the church. The fault is in the freedom of each person. We all must decide in our own consciences what side we will take. God our Lord is offering us marvelous fruits if we let him sow in us that sprout which will produce prolific branches, the fruits of eternal life. This is God's plan, and that's why the church is the vineyard where God's kingdom will always be in crisis. Blessed are those who feel the crisis deeply and resolve it by committing themselves to our Lord. I am very glad that precisely in this hour of crisis many who were asleep have woken up and are at least asking where the truth is to be found. Look for it! Saint Paul shows us the way: it is found with prayer, reflection, and esteem for what is good. These are wonderful criteria. Wherever there is something noble, something good, something just, there we find God (Phil 4:6). If besides these natural virtues there is grace, holiness, sacraments, and the joy of a conscience divinized by

God, then we find God there also. God is not found in those other establishments that give a false sense of peace and produce phony victories.

And so, dear sisters and brothers, considering this vineyard in crisis, I want to end briefly with the third point, which is a way of inviting you to the Eucharist where Christ offers himself, for he told us, «I am the vine, and you are the branches» (John 15:5). I want to urge us all to experience with this church the intensity of her community, her faith, and her hope.

Life of the church

Who has not been moved this week by the prayer for the eternal rest of John Paul I? In Rome and here in our cathedral, the people have prayed for the Holy Father. Next Saturday the cardinals will gather together to elect the new pope. This should be a week of intense prayer for all of us.

In speaking of the pontiff, I want to express my thanks for the noble letter sent me by the pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church. Among the letter's very rich Christian themes, I highlight this one: «The meaning of the life and witness of the last two pontiffs has left an ineradicable mark on history and on us ministers and priests, for in the midst of temporal affairs they maintained a vision of the eternal as the foundation of the justice of God». The pastor also added this statement, and I'm grateful that he coincides with my thinking about this crisis: «We seem to be in the hour of the great temptation when there is a conflict between, on the one hand, a Christianity warped by the arrogance of the world's kingdoms that demand adoration and, on the other, fidelity to the beautiful, generous Gospel of humiliation that culminates in the cross but that manifests its force and its power in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ». Many thanks, beloved brother Carlos, for this ecumenical gesture that is so profoundly Christian.

The church is alive. I saw this vineyard that God has planted in our archdiocese up close last Sunday when celebrating the tenth anniversary of the ordination of Father Samuel Orellana in his parish of Ayutuxtepeque. What joy and what youthful energy in that community!

Also last Sunday, the Carmelite Missionary Sisters celebrated in Plan de Pino the twenty-fifth anniversary of their arrival in El Salvador. They prepared a superb confirmation ceremony, and we dialogued with groups that show what a lively community that is in this vineyard of the Lord.

On Monday the second, Opus Dei members, whose patronal feast is the day of the Holy Angels, commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of their founding. The church rejoices with every effort of sanctification in the world, and she desires at this moment of crisis in the church that people live not only with a personal, individual holiness but also with a communal, community-oriented holiness that bears witness to the Light of the world. As Cardinal Pironio said in response to a question about the authenticity of Christian and religious life, there are three chief criteria: great love for Christ, great fidelity to the founding charism, and also great adaptability to the pastoral ministry of the local church.

I want to emphasize this third element because many communities have demonstrated their capacity for adaptation. The Franciscans in the parish of Concepción are providing a true

service to the world in their church, which is situated in a very difficult area of the capital. We celebrated with them there on the feast of Saint Francis. We celebrated also with an Oblate Sister of Divine Love in San Francisco Lempa, where she is now helping to develop a very fervent community. I want to congratulate both this sister and Father Benito Alfaro, whose name was smeared this week in the newspapers as being an accomplice of the guerillas³. Benito Alfaro is a humble priest, and he stoutly defended the Sacred Heart Sisters when there were attempts to manipulate them politically in Dulce Nombre de María. But I want to tell you that Father Benito Alfaro has nothing to do with the calumny they published.

On Saturday the seventh we celebrated the feast of the Holy Rosary. We join in the joy of the Dominican fathers of El Rosario and all the parishes that have that name in our diocese. And we recommend that everyone pray the holy rosary as an expression of the life of Christian communities and Christian families. In Soyapango also the faithful are celebrating the feast of our Lady of the Rosary. It is very consoling to see how devotion to the Virgin is an expression of the life of our Christian communities.

Tonight at seven o'clock the entire Catholic community of Santa Tecla has been invited to a Mass in the church of El Calvario, where we are going to express our solidarity with the pastoral work of the new pastor, Father Francisco Javier Aguilar. So we hope to see you there at seven o'clock tonight in El Calvario in Santa Tecla.

As the vineyard of the Lord planted in our country, the church must also deplore the arrest this week of two priests and some lay collaborators. Father David Rodríguez was taken, along with Mr. Guillermo Joaquín Cuéllar, to the National Police compound, and Father Trinidad de Jesús Nieto was taken to the National Guard. We ask what is being sought with such actions. In view of the very respectful treatment given to Father David and the cunning interrogation of him regarding our radio station, we ask whether they're trying to manipulate the hierarchy itself. We ask this because they also called Bishop Aparecio to give him a report. Are they trying to manipulate this situation so that it is not the government but the church hierarchy that demands that our radio station be closed down? That would be very sad, but we ask those who no longer want to hear this voice at least to have the courage to give us the orders themselves. May it be God's desire, sisters and brothers, that I never have to stop speaking. This is a small voice of the church that still has freedom to speak. If they control all the other means of communication, what trouble can a radio station and small newspaper cause them? The force we have is justice. Truth is what gives greatness to the smallness of our media. That's why they are feared.

The National Commission of Justice and Peace of El Salvador has published an interesting booklet with facts about the events in Nicaragua. What the eyewitnesses have stated is horrifying, sisters and brothers. We hope that the Human Rights Commission and the mediators in this conflict do not evade the problems but rather make heard the cries of the people of Nicaragua. For our part, we sent a modest donation of 4,000 *colones* that had been collected in our archdiocese, and we'll continue to collect funds to help our sisters and brothers. The amount is small for such great needs, but it is something, especially when its inspiration is love.

³ *El Mundo* (6 October 1978).

The fifth-grade students of the Externado San José made a lovely gesture, sort of a tiny seedling in the vineyard, by sending me as a gift their best work over the last two weeks. The theme of their work was beautiful: «The Church is My Homeland». I congratulate these youngsters and the school for promoting such an understanding of the church.

Events of the week

As the kingdom of God, sisters and brothers, the church cannot prescind from her human roots or from the realities of the earth where she lives. She must speak out, and I've already said something about the problem of the university. Attempts are being made to recommence classes, but there is still much fear. The faculty of economics has already announced that they will not hold classes. For its part, the government has stated that the watchmen do not depend on any official security force. It is therefore urgent to investigate the presence of an armed body of men in our center of culture since, sadly, they have demonstrated the violence of which they are capable, especially since they feel they're autonomous.

I've received a note of gratitude from the wife of Doctor Carlos Alberto Rodriguez, the dean of the faculty of economics who was killed. In the note she thanks the church for the prayers offered and for voicing condemnation of this cruel injustice. There was also a letter from an anguished woman, Doña Carmen de Castro, the wife of Major Doctor Alfonso Castro Sam who disappeared mysteriously. If those who can bring light to this darkness are listening to me now, I transmit to you this very moving letter. Doña Carmen writes, «I have faith, and my children and I hope, that my husband will be returned safe and sound. If any persons have information that they can offer me about him, I will be very grateful to them. And I also thank you for all that you can do and say on behalf of this grieving family». The church is at the service of human pain wherever it exists, and we therefore ask everyone to be as understanding and helpful as possible.

On the Day of the Child some very touching letters arrived, sisters and brothers, and I would like simply to mention one thing that a group of *campesino* children wrote, «We would like to ask you to intercede for the political prisoners. There are so many of us children crying because our fathers or mothers are imprisoned or disappeared!» Another letter from a small rural school says, «We would be very grateful if you would please make this denunciation: the National Guard took away our teacher. Our teacher is very good; he is not involved in politics. We don't know where they took him, and we don't know where they're holding him. They didn't even give him time to close up the school. We want to finish the school year. We are students in the first and second grade». This is what Isaiah cried out: «I looked for justice, and I heard nothing but laments» (Isa 5:7).

Also, some very hopeful news was graciously communicated to me by letter. A number of lawyers have organized the Association of Professionals of the Juridical Sciences, and they have expressed their condolences for the death of the pope and their solidarity with our church. I tell you, this is something quite wonderful, just knowing that not everyone is unfeeling. In fact, sisters and brothers, that is what worries me: the insensitivity that's taking root. Villages are raided, people are assaulted, people are disappeared, and all this seems like the most natural thing in the world. Let us hope that the sensitivity of these lawyers succeeds in awakening the civic conscience of our people. According to a newspaper report, several lawyers declared that the Supreme Court of Justice and the attorney general's office are

allowing the dishonesty of judges to continue⁴. In response the secretary general of the court asked the newspaper for the names of those lawyers in order to ask for their collaboration. Hopefully those demands won't be met only with such cheap excuses as, «Give us the names». They know who they are!

Also in regard to this church of ours, we want to express anew our condolences to Mrs. Matsumoto and her children. They have finally found the body of her husband who mysteriously disappeared⁵. Someone mentioned to me that it was like a «show», but I'm not sure about that. It would certainly be a terrible mockery for them to make a «show» of a corpse. What is certain is that the body appeared and that the ashes, according to the rite of the Japanese, are already in the urn in which they'll be taken to his homeland. We feel sad to think of the memories that this family will take away from our country, but they have also praised the hospitality of Salvadorans and the friendship they've experienced—I can personally tell you of their satisfaction in this regard. Mrs. Matsumoto and her family have not been left alone; they have always received moral support from good friends in our country. I also want to praise the unity of the Japanese community, which has shown great solidarity in this grief-stricken family's time of pain.

We also want to express our solidarity with the petition of the residents of the El Rosario estate near Metapán, which was sold to the government. They are asking not to be evicted before they find a place where they can relocate. We also take up the cause of the teachers as expressed in the papers this week; it concerns the problem of alcoholism among some teachers⁶. Let us hope that Alcoholics Anonymous, which was mentioned in this dialogue with great promise, will extend their saving arms. I take this opportunity to congratulate my dear friends of Alcoholics Anonymous, and I renew my call for you to continue to be saviors of our society by sending your lifeboats out into the seas where so many of our people are drowning.

The victory of Christ will be won through his church

I don't want to prolong this homily much longer, sisters and brothers, and I ask you to forgive me, but let me end the homily with my final point and then invite you to the Eucharist. We said in the first point that God planted a vineyard, his church, in the world. We said, second, that this vineyard church reflects the crises of the kingdom of God and of humanity. And the third and final point was this: the victory will be Christ's.

«I am the true vine», says the Lord, «and whoever remains united with me will bear much fruit» (John 15:5). This is a call, then, for us to second God's desire for his vineyard to produce much fruit. God wants that sprout planted in our hearts on the day of our baptism to produce first of all the natural virtues so characteristic of the Salvadoran people. There is something glorious, sisters and brothers, in those natural virtues of the Salvadoran people, which I have mentioned in various ways before. But they are not enough. Let us also sow in this fertile land the sprout of Christ, the vine, eternal life, faith, prayer, our Sunday Mass, the sacraments— all of these raise us up to transcendent perspectives and give us hope amid the crises and the difficulties, even amid the injustices and the violence of our country. Our great

⁴ *El Diario de Hoy* (4 October 1978).

⁵ *La Prensa Gráfica* (5 October 1978).

⁶ *El Diario de Hoy* (6 October 1978).

hope is that not all is lost, because the sprout of God is well rooted in our land. Let it be so.
[Applause]