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THE EUCHARIST IS THE LIVING AND LIFE-GIVING PRESENCE OF CHRIST IN HISTORY

**Corpus Christi
17 June 1979**

Exodus 24:3-8
Hebrews 9:11-15
Mark 14:12-16, 22-26

My dear sisters and brothers, it is quite appropriate for us to pay homage to the Body and Blood of the Son of Man in the midst of so many outrages being committed against the body and blood among us. As we render the homage of our faith to the presence of Christ's Body and his Blood shed for us, I want to gather together all the blood and all the bodies massacred here in our country and in our sister republic of Nicaragua and in the entire world. Without any doubt Christ gathers up this blood each time that this mystery is celebrated: «This is my Body. This is the Blood of humanity's covenant with God that is shed for the forgiveness of the world» (Mark 14:22,24). Unfortunately, not all blood that is shed is holy like that of Christ, but all blood is sacred. Every body that is immolated, even by violence, is a life truncated, and life also is sacred.

Consequently, our homage to the Corpus Christi, to the Body of the Lord, does not end with a man killed because of the world's injustice. Our homage does not end with him nailed on a cross, but it greets him three days later, risen in glorious triumph through the sacrifice of the shedding of his blood. On this feast of Corpus Christi, therefore, we want to gather together the hopes of those who have died for an ideal and unite them with the hopes of so many families and so many widows and orphans who are suffering as a consequence of these murders and these violent deaths. And we want to tell them that the Body of Christ that we venerate today on the altar, the Body that died but then rose again, lives now in resurrected glory. But it still bears the sign of torture, injustice, and murder as the protest of God's eternal justice against the sin of the world. Nothing remains hidden. Everything will be brought to justice. Everything will find its place.

Our homage, therefore, to the Body of Christ is most opportune. Like all feasts of the church, we must give this one a concrete, practical application and make it present in our history. Liturgical feasts do not just recall things past; they are not celebrations of abstract notions. Like the Gospel, our liturgical feasts must be incarnated in our reality, which may sometimes be hard, shameful, cruel, and painful, but it is the reality that Christ raises up to be redeemed and sanctified.

What do we celebrate on this feast of Corpus Christi? We celebrate Catholic dogma and the faith that has brought us here together at Sunday Mass. Let us hope that we all deepen that faith day by day as we gather together in Christian assemblies, whether here in the cathedral or in the humble village chapel. When the priest says the words we heard in today's gospel, «Take

and eat, this is my body. This is my blood of the Christian covenant which is shed for the forgiveness of sins» (Mark 14:22,24), and lifts the host high, then the people—whether standing as a sign of respect or kneeling as a sign of adoration—acknowledge that before their eyes, in the sign of bread and wine, the Body and the Blood of the Lord are truly, really, and substantially present.

This is a living presence that gives life. The presence of Christ in the Eucharist has two aspects. First, he is present as victim, as sacrifice; the sacrifice of Christ on the cross becomes wholly real in every Mass that is celebrated. Second, he is present as communion, by which Christ nourishes us with love. The one bread is shared as in a family; even if a family is poor, the mother shares the same bread among her children, and they feel united as a family as they sit around the table. The altar is a place of sacrifice, but it is also a dining table—this is true of the altar of the cathedral or of any church. That is why we pay such honor to the altar: we adorn it with flowers, we incense it, we cover it with luxurious linens, the more the better. It's because it represents Christ. But Christ becomes present in the host and the chalice at the moment of the Mass. He is the victim who gathers together the sacrifices of all men and women to offer them to God. And he is also communion, calling everyone to form a single family in love, the family of God which is nourished with the Flesh and the Blood of the heavenly Lamb, the bread that descends from heaven.

I am therefore going to propose the following theme for our reflection: «The Eucharist is the Living and Life-giving Presence of Christ in History». This is what the Eucharist is: the living, active, life-giving presence of Christ in person here in history. The main personage present in the Mass is Christ on the altar, and every time we come to Mass, it is Christ we come to hear, to follow, to love. I want to expound three thoughts that flow from this central idea: first, the Eucharist is the complete fulfillment of the ancient covenants; second, the Eucharist is the principle and sign of God's kingdom among us; and third, the Eucharist is the inspiration and force of our eschatological hope. Our hope for what lies beyond is already present here in our hearts; it is a hope that is inspired by Christ present in our history.

The Eucharist is the complete fulfillment of the ancient covenants

First of all, today's readings invite us to make a very interesting comparison. In the first reading from the Old Testament and in the two readings from the New Testament, the Eucharist is presented as a sacrament that Christ established in order to bring to full perfection and completion everything signified by the ancient covenants. We are moved to believe that Christ rises up today on the altar of our cathedral—as if this were the Upper Room—and tells us what we read in the gospel: «Take, this is my body» (Mark 14:22). Through the ministry of his priest Christ then transforms the chalice with a little grape wine that the people presented in the offertory procession of the Mass, and he hands it to the people saying, «Take, this is the chalice of the blood of the covenant, the blood that will be shed for the forgiveness of all of you» (Mark 14.24). «Blood of the covenant—how many centuries do those words of the Lord evoke!

Those of you who have followed the thought of our catechesis during the whole of Lent this year will recall that we have reviewed the different covenants that have marked the stages of the history of salvation. There was the prehistoric covenant with Noah under the sign of the rainbow. The second covenant was with Abraham, marking the stage of the patriarchs. Then we found ourselves at the stage of Moses and the covenant of Sinai. The first reading today

relates Moses to Christ. The great promise for the people that was born on Mount Sinai reached fulfillment on another summit, that of Calvary, when it was sealed with the blood of Christ, not with the blood of animals offered by Moses on an altar.

What was the covenant with Moses? It was the ratification of God's love in choosing one nation from among all nations to make his own people, and it was also the response of the people of that nation who told God through Moses, «We will do everything that the Lord has told us» (Exod 24:3). Today's reading tells us that Moses ratified with blood the love with which God chose a people and that people's acceptance of God's election: «He erected an altar at the foot of Mount Sinai and around it placed twelve stones for the twelve tribes of Israel» (Exod 24:4). Realizing that something great was about to happen, Moses sent young men to kill the victims that were to be offered to God (Exod 24:5-6). The blood was collected in a bowl and then divided into two parts since a covenant of blood is a pact between two parties. The altar represented the divinity, so half the blood was poured over the altar; the other part of the covenant was the people themselves, those who had been chosen and had accepted the call to be God's people. Moses then read the law of God to the people, and the people responded, «We accept it. We will do all that the Lord says» (Exod 24:7). Since blood was the sign of the covenant, Moses took the other half of the blood and sprinkled it on the people: «May his blood fall on this people» (Exod 24:8). The blood of God was represented by the blood of animals.

For Israelites and for the Bible generally, blood was the source of life. That's why I said earlier that on this day of the Blood of Christ it is a beautiful thing for us to gather all the blood that has been shed, all the life that has been dispersed on our soil, all the life that has been thrown even into sewers and drains. All this life that counted for naught is now gathered to seal a covenant between God and humankind because blood is the source of life. When Moses sprinkled the altar and the people, it signified a vital communion that united God with the people. They were the people of God, and their reconciliation came about through the sacrifice of the victims. The death of the animals represented the sacrificial offering of the people, and the martyrdom of the poor animals represented the people themselves, who were asking God for pardon. Today's reading calls it the sacrifice of communion or the sacrifice of reconciliation (Exod 24:5). The sprinkling of blood on the altar and on the people was the sacrifice of communion, and by it we enter into living communion with God. Just as the twelve stones represented the human aspect of the Israelites, the sprinkled blood represented the joining of all of them in one single family united in love. That was the symbolic gesture of the old covenant that culminated on Sinai.

But all those ancient events were signs of what was yet to come. Despite the splendor of the covenant of Sinai, it was limited, provisional, imperfect. It was limited because it included only the people of Israel. It was provisional because the prophets were only deciphering signs and announcing a new covenant that would be universal and profound. Finally, the Sinai covenant was imperfect because it concerned itself only with legal purification that was external and ritualistic.

Thus today's second reading compares the old covenant with the new one. That is indeed a major theme in the letter to the Hebrews, which was written to encourage the Jews who were converting to Christianity. The Jews had a long tradition that came from Moses. What was important in their mind was the Jerusalem temple, the ceremonies of the priests, and the sacrifices on the altars. Such nostalgia was dangerous for a Christianity that was only beginning and was being persecuted; it had no temples nor were its priests magnificently

robed as other Eastern priests were. Persecution made many Jews turn back; they left Christianity and returned to the Mosaic law. It was to these Jewish converts that the letter to the Hebrews was written, to show them that, no matter how magnificent the Jerusalem temple might appear and no matter how traditional the rites of Moses might seem, they were sadly imperfect by comparison to the sacrifice of Christ.

Today's beautiful passage presents us with Christ vested as the eternal High Priest and passing through a temple that is not made by human hands. What he bears is not the blood of animals or the heifer's ashes which Moses sprinkled about; rather, Christ bears his own blood as he enters into the infinite sanctuary of heaven (Heb 9:11-12). Moses was just a foreshadowing; this is the reality. The sacrifice of Sinai had no power to pardon the conscience or cleanse it of sins, but now this is the immaculate Lamb who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

The liberation offered by Moses was simply escape from Egypt. The Exodus was a fine example of liberation, but it was only in the temporal order. The people left Egypt only to travel to the Promised Land. In contrast, the truly great liberation is that given to us by Christ under the impulse of the «eternal Spirit», as the Bible tells us today (Heb 9:14). This is «the eternal liberation» (Heb 9:12) that snatches us from the claws of sin and hellfire. This is the liberation that seeks to free the world of every form of slavery and injustice. This is the liberation that allows the church to preach persuasively the redemption of all men and women. This is the liberation—take special note of this—that includes the movements for earthly liberation, but it includes them so as to make them truly effective. It seeks to free them also from sin and abuse of power. It is only natural, then, that the church, which exercises this liberating force in order to communicate it to struggling human groups, should reproach them for the evil they do when they pursue their struggles wrongly.

But the church also confronts those who don't want other people to struggle against injustice. She sides with those who cry out against abuse of power, abuse of wealth, and all abuse that is sinful, whatever it may be. It is the power of Christ with the eternal Spirit that gives true freedom and proclaims the autonomy and independence of God's kingdom in the midst of the world. The church is not concerned with pleasing anybody; her only concern is freeing people and pleasing God and offering him a humanity that is completely free from everything that enslaves people.

This is what the letter to the Hebrews is telling us when it compares the worship of the new covenant with that of the old covenant of Sinai. And the precise aim of the feast of Corpus Christi is to remind us of the real meaning of that letter to the Hebrews. At this Corpus Christi Mass and at the four o'clock Mass this afternoon, let us be aware that the principal celebrant of this gathering is Christ, the eternal High Priest. He is the one who is leading the people by the paths of true Christian liberation.

The Eucharist is the principle and the sign of God's kingdom among us

That is why, as a second reflection, I say that the Eucharist is the principle and the sign of God's kingdom now present among us. The Eucharist has the same basis as the offering of Moses. On the night before Christ shed his blood in death, he left us a chalice with the same blood that would be poured forth on Good Friday: «This is my blood, the blood of the covenant» (Mark 14:24). This is no longer a bowl filled with the blood of animals. This is blood from the very veins of the God-man who is going to sacrifice himself for the world. Today's epistle calls him

«the mediator of the new covenant» (Heb 9:15). How wonderful it is to reflect on this Catholic reality! Every Sunday at every Mass we receive from the chalice on our altar all Christ's love, all his pain, all his merit, all his sacrifice. Recalling the useless sacrifices of antiquity, Christ brings about redemption through his sacrifice on the cross: «Do this in memory of me» (Luke 22:19).

And how pleased I am when I say to the Lord, «See how many people remember you, Lord! See the cathedral is full! Behold the many churches of the diocese and the whole world! Even in the humble chapels, groups of people are going to Mass!» As I was coming to the cathedral this morning, I saw small groups of people along all the roads coming from San José de la Montaña. I felt great emotion as I thought about what I'm telling you now. These people wanted to be in contact with the sign and the principle of a new world, with the kingdom of God that can be experienced only by Catholics who truly have faith in the redeeming Christ.

The Eucharist is the presence of the paschal mystery of Christ. When the priest raises the host and says, «This is the sacrament of our faith», you respond with your belief: «We announce your death. We proclaim your resurrection». This is the Eucharist: announcing the death of the Lord and proclaiming eternal life. This shows the confidence of men and women who know that, amidst the darkness and confusion of our history, they are following the bright light of Christ, who is eternal life.

Christ, now risen, has sown in the world the seed of a new world. The Second Vatican Council tells us that all those who nourish that seed are called church (LG 9). It may be that they are not the majority of humanity, but that little group around Christ has the certain honor of being the seed of unity and salvation for the entire world. At this moment I have the sense that you and I are drawing strength and energy from that nucleus of salvation and unity. When we leave from Mass, we should leave in the same way that Moses descended from Sinai, with his face shining and his heart emboldened to face the world's difficulties. We should be, as a holy church father said, like lions who have eaten fire. What a magnificent thing it would be—a Christian band of lions who have eaten fire and who go through the world, nourished by this fire of love that is Christ, not concealing the faith like cowards but proclaiming it as the only way to salvation! This is the truth; everything else is falsehood. This is justice; everything else is dishonor and injustice. Christians have the guarantee of Christ and are the seed of salvation. If there is any hope for a new world, for a new country, for a more just social order, for a reflection of God's kingdom in our society, then be certain, sisters and brothers, that it is you Christians who are going to bring about that wondrous new world. But this will happen only when we truly communicate to others this life that we receive in the Eucharist when we come to our Sunday Mass. This is the seed that will transform the world.

Life of the church

That is why I insist here, sisters and brothers, that Christian preaching and living in San Salvador in 1979 must be like the eternal Christian living of Moses and Christ and the apostles—it must be like what they experienced in their own time and place. It makes me sad to think that there are people who don't evolve. There are people who say, «Everything the church is doing now is bad because it's not like what we used to do when we were children». They remember their school days and would like to have a static form of Christianity that resembles a history museum. The Christian Gospel is not like that; it stirs up reality. It must denounce sins, but not the sins of the time of Moses and Egypt, nor the sins of the time of Christ and Pilate and Herod and the Roman empire. It is the sins of today, here in El Salvador, the sins

that we experience in our own historical setting. We must live this seed of holiness and unity right here, in the tremendous reality of the concrete people we are.

What is our church communion like? I received a telegram from Las Flores, Chalatenango. The pastor there told me on Friday, «Corpus Christi yesterday packed. Everything well-ordered and devout despite much political turmoil. *Campesinos* preserve ancient faith, deep-rooted devotions, thank God. Sincere greetings». I would say that many places have had the same experience as Las Flores on Thursday. And today, Sunday, because of the transfer of the feast of Corpus Christi, we will have our Christians gathered around the Eucharist here in the cathedral at four in the afternoon. It's consoling to know that our churches everywhere are filled for Mass on Sundays. Somebody told me that nowadays more people are going to church than ever. I mention this by way of telling you that this community of the archdiocese is acquiring its own particular identity. Just as individual persons are different from one another, so our archdiocese must have its specific character different from that of other dioceses in the world, and it is we who have to cultivate it.

This Thursday Archbishop Luis Chávez y González will celebrate his name day. He is part of our archdiocesan character. His thirty-six years as archbishop have left us a heritage, which is you Christians, your faith, and your love of Christ. Let us give thanks to the Lord and keep cultivating that heritage.

Here in the community of the archdiocese we mourn the death of a beloved priest, Father José Abdón Arce, the pastor of Santiago de María. He will be buried this afternoon in Jucuapa.

Various communities have also celebrated significant events. In San José de la Montaña they are renewing the parish leadership. We want to give that parish a strong sense of seminary and vocations. We'd like everybody to help us give the parish of San José de la Montaña a more diocesan and ecclesial orientation, as we'll explain later.

Last Sunday we celebrated the patronal feast in Divine Providence parish in Colonia Atlacatl. The church was filled, and I had the opportunity to explain the meaning of providence in our lives. It doesn't mean laziness or passivity; rather it means collaborating with God, who is provident and guides the world but still depends on our efforts.

In Soyapango we celebrated the feast of Saint Anthony, asking ourselves what the message of this saint of the Middle Ages should be for us today. The scholars tell us that Anthony was a saint who knew how to speak difficult truths in his time.

The Sisters of the Assumption are working in Colonia Morazán, a poor peripheral zone. They gave me the delightful opportunity to confirm some young people there. How wonderful they were! After receiving catechetical preparation and making a spiritual retreat, they received the Holy Spirit for the purpose of being docile instruments of the Spirit of God in the world.

I also had the opportunity to visit the Sara Rest Home at the novitiate of the Oblate Sisters of the Sacred Heart. They are doing a great work of Christian love.

This Friday at six in the evening we're going to celebrate the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart. This is a devotion that should not go out of style because it commemorates Christ's love for humankind. All we have to do is bring it up to date and experience it according to the needs of these new times.

In the market during the month of June, a mission of the Heart of Jesus will be carried out with popular prayers and preaching by priests. I'll be taking part in that mission on the first Sunday of July at eleven in the morning. That's when the Ana Guerra de Jesús Center, which assists the market women with their lives, will be celebrating its monthly Mass for the Heart of Jesus.

This past week on Monday the church had the opportunity to express the church's thinking about birth control at a roundtable at the National University. What's happening in El Salvador is regretful, sisters and brothers, and I want all of you to ask whether this is not similar to God's punishment of Babylon or Sodom or Gomorrah. When you talk with doctors or technicians in the hospitals, you feel ashamed for what is happening. One medical student told me—please forgive me the word—«They are castrating our people». There are massive sterilizations of women and men. Contraceptive materials are distributed without shame, without penalty, without decency. I ask you all to reflect seriously that the source of life is as sacred as life itself. The relations between man and woman, sanctified in matrimony, have a double finality. One finality is mutual love and intimate unity, but it is not the only one; there is also the finality of procreation. Therefore, the principle of the church is that every conjugal act has to remain open to life and that anything that disrupts life at its very source is a sin against nature.

With me at the roundtable was Father Guillermo Gibbons. He is also a medical doctor and is working on a campaign with the World Health Organization to investigate natural methods. Father Gibbons works with doctors from other countries and claims that the experiences they've been studying are successful at least ninety-eight percent of the time. Why then should one sin with artificial birth control when the work of these doctors has discovered natural means that God has placed within nature itself? But then we moved on from there to the more criminal activity of abortion. One doctor said that medical and contraceptive means were not as effective as abortion, which has increased among us. How can this be? If the alternative is so shameless, what can we say about the many abortions that take place among our people? Sisters and brothers, this is a crime. If we deplore repression and the killing of our young people and adults, then it's the same with killing the life in the womb of a woman. The murdered professor is human, and the murdered minister of education is human. Likewise, the child in the womb is human, and it is murdered by abortion. If the child is prevented from coming to life and only pleasure is sought, then that is robbing nature. Would that we would reflect more on this and do everything we can so that there is no sin in the world. And may God bless us and deliver us from such great injustice and disorder.

Let us look out at the world from our community, and let us reflect on our Corpus Christi of 1979, which is the soul of this church present in the world. I was delighted to hear the words of John Paul II as he took leave of Poland. When he told the president of Poland, «This visit has consumed all my energy», Cardinal Wyszyński, who was with them, responded, «But your visit, Holiness, has given strength to our country». This is the church's pastor who gives his life so that the people may have life. As he was leaving, he also told the reporters, «When you provide complete information that is faithful and exact, then you make it possible for every

man and woman to take part in the affairs of all humanity. Ideally, your lives are dedicated to the service of the truth. To the extent that you remain faithful to that ideal, you are deserving of the respect and gratitude of all»¹. He reminded them of when Christ stood before Pontius Pilate and declared, «For this have I come into the world, to testify to the truth» (John 18:37). The pope told the reporters that they should adopt this saying of Christ before Pilate as their own². They must do this before Pilate! That means speaking the truth in the face of political threats, despite the dangers involved. Even if they risk being killed as Christ was for speaking the truth, journalists should be as brave as he was. They should declare, «This is why I am in the world—not to distort the truth, not to be the tool of party politics, not to serve selfish interests—but to tell the truth!» When will we have journalists of that caliber?

I want also to refer to another reality from our perspective of the Corpus Christi. Let us take a look at the sad situation of Nicaragua. It's estimated that more than a thousand people have died already. Every peaceful solution has been rejected, and the bishops have issued a statement in which they outlined the principles for legitimate revolt. This document of the Nicaraguan bishops states the following: «We are all painfully affected by the extremes of the revolutionary insurrections, but their moral and juridical legitimacy cannot be denied since it is “a case of evident and prolonged tyranny that attacks the fundamental rights of the person and damages the common good of the country”» (PP 31)³. Since we have always been respectful of the judgment of another hierarchy when it comes to judging the situation of their people, I believe we should express our solidarity with the bishops' support for the autonomy and freedom of the people. At the same time, we protest not only against the crimes of tyranny, which are evident, but also against the danger that crimes will also be committed by those reacting against that tyranny. The church cannot take sides while there is danger of betraying her message of impartial justice for everybody.

I was citing from our message regarding Nicaragua, which you can read in *Orientación*. I ask you to be true brothers and sisters to those who are suffering hunger and extremely precarious conditions there in Nicaragua. The day before yesterday I heard someone on the radio say, «I haven't eaten anything since Sunday». Imagine the anguish behind those words! Therefore, in all the parishes and communities and with the help of the archdiocesan Caritas, we're going to take up a collection of food that doesn't spoil and send it along with other things that might be useful. So I make an appeal to the charity and compassion of all of you so that we can deliver this assistance to our sisters and brothers. Check to see if there is an organization of Caritas in your community because they, and the pastors as well, have specific instructions for taking up this collection that we'll send by secure methods to the church of Nicaragua.

Although it is far away, let us think about the meaning of the tragedy in Hong Kong, where 52,000 refugees from Vietnam are waiting for other countries to open their arms to them so that they can find hope for their future lives. It is clear that El Salvador cannot welcome them, but El Salvador can intervene so that countries with better territorial capacity can provide a home for those 52,000 refugees who are waiting in Hong Kong—but it's an emergency, and they cannot wait long.

¹ JOHN PAUL II, «Discourse in Cracow to Communications Professionals», 10 June 1979, in *L'Osservatore Romano* (24 June 1979).

² *Ibid.*

³ «Message to the People of Nicaragua from the Bishops' Conference of Nicaragua», 2 June 1979, in *Orientación* (17 June 1979).

Events of the week

Let us now look at the wave of violence that continues to spread, especially among teachers. Twenty-two have been killed already; two have disappeared, Juan José Herrera and Roberto Romero; two have been seriously wounded; and many threats have been received from the UGB. I recall with emotion what a teacher in a small town told his students: «I'm leaving you because I've received a death threat, and I don't know if I'll be able to teach you again». Many schools in the country have been closed because of threats and fear.

Considering this, I've prepared a message for the teachers which will be published on June 22, the Day of the Teacher. In the message I develop three points: I protest against the repression they're enduring, I support their authentic vocation as teachers, and I offer them the Divine Teacher as a model for their life and work in education. I want to give you an idea of how I developed the central idea of support for the teacher's vocation. «Given your difficult circumstances, I am interested in supporting you teachers so that you can carry out your vocation faithfully. I urge you to follow the recommendations of the last national seminar on educational reform, which viewed education as a process which gives students critical awareness and engages them as agents of change in the construction of a more just society. This means educating Salvadorans who are not conformist but are realistic, hard-working, responsible, and creative in developing the country's social and economic processes»⁴.

In this regard I also seek to defend the education given in our Catholic schools, which some malicious people are trying to malign by saying that the students in our schools are being indoctrinated with Marxism. This is false. All we are doing is providing critical formation, as I just said. This is no longer the time for the mass of people to be dormant so that others can do with them as they like. In our schools we want to form men and women who know how to criticize what is unjust and also to discern what is just. We don't want them simply to follow tradition for its own sake when it results in situations like the one we're now experiencing.

There are more victims of violence, including union leaders and members of the Union of Slum Dwellers⁵ and of other organizations such as FECCAS, UTC, and FAPU. The *campesinos* Manuel Barahona Chávez, Domingo Murcia, and Rubén Quezada were arrested and then found shot to death. Three other unidentified bodies were found in Tierra Blanca. There have also been lethal threats, such as those the UGB made against the poet Rafael Góchez Sosa and Doctor Luis Alonso Posadas; yesterday they also threatened a priest⁶, and in recent days they've threatened several other Christians.

Regarding kidnapping, we continue to be concerned about the two Englishmen. We also mention and request your concern for three other kidnap victims: Adolfo Antonio Rios⁷, Miguel Armando Miguel⁸, and Carlos Rafael Nieto Álvarez⁹.

⁴ «Message of Archbishop Romero of San Salvador to the Teachers», 22 June 1979, in *Orientación* (24 June 1979).

⁵ Union of Slum Dwellers [Unión de Pobladores de Tugurios—UPT].

⁶ On 16 June 1979 the UGB issued a death threat to Father Rafael Palacio.

⁷ Farmer of Santa Ana kidnapped on 11 June 1979 and freed the following day. *La Prensa Gráfica* (12 and 13 June 1979).

⁸ Businessman of San Salvador kidnapped on 29 May 1979. The ERP claimed responsibility in a statement released on 14 June 1979. *La Crónica del Pueblo* (14 June 1979).

⁹ Coffee grower of Santa Ana kidnapped by the ERP on 14 June 1979. *La Crónica del Pueblo* (15 June 1979).

I have the list of people who have been arrested but not brought before the courts even though they have had recourse to habeas corpus, which is a constitutional right but one that is disregarded. The list names at least twelve persons arrested under these circumstances. Mentioning their names means that the church is defending them, and so I mention them now as the voice of their distraught families. They are Cruz Flores, Manuel Antonio Mejía, María Reina Mejía, Carlos Mejía, Blanca Elía Beltrán, all of whom are *campesinos*. Other names are Santana Antonio Rodríguez, Hernán Delgado, Mercedes Palacios, Pedro Juan Alvarado, José Mario Palacios, Cristóbal López, and Benjamín Gavidia. Because of a lack of time I cannot give more details, but these are cases of humble *campesinos* and workers who perhaps left to go to work or to visit someone and never returned home. Let us hope that their disappearance is not permanent.

Let us thank God that there may still be some hope when one corner of the veil is raised and the mystery of iniquity stands revealed, as happened, for example, in the case where the police abuse was shown and the true authors of the crime were identified. At first it was thought that the execution had been carried out by the FPL since their flag was found near the victims. The intellectual author of the crime was an inspector of the National Police who has been working with the security forces for more than eighteen years. The material authors were two former police agents who committed the crime for a reward of fifty *colones*. The motive seems to have been a mixture of jealousy and ambition. How many crimes are committed for unknown motives and then become part of this wave of terrorism!

We also need to mention the strike of the seventh-year medical students and the demands being made by the medical residents of the Social Institute¹⁰ and the students at other hospitals. Various organizations have already come out in support of their demands. On the church's part, I would only ask that the greatest concern be shown for the patients so that they don't suffer as a result. At the same time, let us hope that these conflicts will be resolved reasonably without giving rise to new acts of violence.

In general, I want to make it clear to you that these are all symptoms of the crisis of structural injustice in our country. Who does not see this? The situation cannot be fixed with repression and violence. It is necessary for us to enter more deeply into dialogue that is really dialogue, not just a monologue that seeks to defend a single way of thinking. We need a dialogue in which people are ready to seek the truth and put aside their cherished attitudes. Unless this happens, we will never kill the roots that are producing so many awful things.

I want to speak to you from my heart, sisters and brothers, because I also run the risk of becoming insensitive. We become insensitive when we see so many things happening and when hearing about them becomes like «listening to the rain», as we say. But remember that every death is a tragedy that touches so many other lives! Let us be fully aware that every death costs one human life and is an assault on human dignity and human rights. Let us never become insensitive! Let us always ask God for the sensitivity we need so that our sinful silence doesn't make us accomplices of the situation in which we live. Let those who can speak out speak out! Let those who can make demands as professionals make them!

Consequently, what seems to me the most urgent task for those responsible for guiding the country and for leaders of the social classes is an immediate return to constitutionality. So

¹⁰ The Salvadoran Institute of Social Security.

many appeals are made to abide by the law, and yet countless crimes are committed in the name of legality! The state of siege has provided many opportunities for assaulting people with impunity! But behind the law and the state of siege are the Constitution and the democratic organizations of the country. We must not render that democratic structure useless or make the laws of the Constitution an object of ridicule. Those who have sworn to uphold that Constitution are the ones most obliged to give good example by respecting the laws, but all of us must abide by the laws and expose the abuses of authority. Every deed that violates the law must be submitted to justice, and those found guilty should be punished.

I have faith, sisters and brothers, that one day light will shine in all these dark places. The countless disappearances and murders and unidentified corpses and kidnappings by unknown agents—all will come out into the light, and then perhaps we'll be astonished to know who the persons responsible really were. But now it is time to return to true respect for the laws of the country.

Finally, I offer a word of consolation to all the families who are bereft of loved ones because of all these crimes. With that I finish.

The Eucharist is the inspiration and the force of the church's eschatological hope

Now briefly, the third and last point of today's homily: the Eucharist is the inspiration and the force of the church's eschatological hope. What's the meaning of the word «eschatological»? (I've already explained it several times before.) It means what is final, what is beyond history; it is the definitive goal toward which the history of every individual and every people is moving.

At the end of today's gospel Christ, after instituting the Eucharist, bids farewell to his disciples with these words, «In truth I tell you, I shall not drink again the fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God» (Mark 14:25). The Eucharist, as Corpus Christi, makes us look back to Calvary twenty centuries ago and even further back to Moses and the ancient covenants, giving us an incomparable view of history. But the Eucharist also makes us look forward to the future, toward the eternal, eschatological, and definitive horizon that makes lofty demands of all political systems, all social struggles, and all those concerned for the earth. The church does not neglect the earth, but through the Eucharist she says to all earthly workers, «Look beyond!» Each time the host is raised at Mass, Christ's call is heard, «Until we drink it anew in the kingdom of my Father», and the people reply, «Come, Lord Jesus!» There is always hope for we are a people going forward to meet the Lord. Death is not the end. Death is opening ourselves to the door of eternity.

That's why I said—and I end by saying—that all the blood, all the corpses, all the mysteries of iniquity and sin, all the tortures, all the dens of our security forces where, tragically, many people are slowly dying—these victims are not lost forever. There is an eschatological horizon that will illuminate all that darkness and will sing out truth and justice and victory in the definitive triumph of all those who struggle for justice and for love.

The Eucharist nourishes all the just claims of the earth because it gives them their true horizon. When individuals or groups work only for the earth without any horizon of eternity or any concern for religious horizons, then they are not complete liberators, and they cannot be trusted. Today they struggle for power, and tomorrow they use power to become even worse

repressors. If we fail to see a horizon beyond history that rewards the good and punishes the evil that we humans do on earth, then there can be no true justice or effective struggle.

Let us thank God on this feast of Corpus Christi that among the people there is such great political force and determination to struggle, despite all the tragedy. Christ is no stranger here: Christ is the tortured prisoner; Christ is the man unjustly executed; Christ is the innocent one criminally killed. But Christ is also the great liberator who is giving meaning to all these dead bodies and all this blood. Without doubt he is sanctifying us with the hopeful perspective of eternal life: «Take and eat, this is my body. This is the blood of the eternal covenant» (Mark 14:22,24). Let it be so. (Applause)