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## **THE THREE CHRISTIAN FORCES THAT WILL FORGE THE LIBERATION OF OUR PEOPLE**

**Thirty-second Sunday of Ordinary Time  
11 November 1979**

1 Kings 17:10-16  
Hebrews 9:24-28  
Mark 12:38-44

The word of God, sisters and brothers, is being challenged by history. It is always being challenged this way, and if we Christians succeed in incarnating God's word in our lives, then our own lives will be God's answer to the challenge of history. And so I extend to you this invitation: let us carry out our reflections with a sincere desire to incarnate that word of God not only in our individual lives but also in our communal life, so that at this hour of crisis, filled with hopes and trials, a true people of God will be present in El Salvador, holding out great hope and light for our own history. In Puebla we find the magnificent definition of the church as «a school of the forgers of history» (P 274).

How wonderful it would be if all of us were forgers of our own history! To many people the church's political criteria seem to be limited; she sometimes appears to lack transparency and expertise. The truth is that the church floats above all vicissitudes and happenstances because she is a school that forges women and men for history. She has a word for every moment; she takes a stand precisely as community, according to what the people of God is experiencing at a particular time and place. There is no more profound satisfaction for me, dear sisters and brothers, than this one conviction that I'm trying to communicate to you and also deepen in myself: to the extent that we are church, that is, true Christians who make the Gospel incarnate, to the same extent we will be good citizens, the Salvadorans who are needed at this hour. If we distance ourselves from the inspiration of God's word, we may perhaps be political opportunists who can deal with the short run, but we won't be the Christians who are always forgers of history.

Puebla tells us that at these times of crisis among nations there are two extreme attitudes: people can be «passivists», or they can be «activists» (P 275). The passivists wait, as if everything is coming from God; they pray a lot, but they don't speak out and don't act. In contrast, the activists think that God is very far away and that human beings create history on their own. So they make short-term decisions and take advantage of opportunities; they think they can pass judgment on all those who don't think as they do. The activists consider themselves the architects of history. But neither the activists nor the passivists are in the right.

God teaches his people the proper attitude in times of crisis, and he prepared the people of Israel as a historical example for all peoples. What did Israel do at the key moments of its history? First, it discovered God in its history, and second, it understood that it had a covenant with the God of history, a covenant that made the Israelites the architects of their

history. Because both God and humanity had joined together in a covenant of liberation, they worked always to free the people. Never humanity alone, and never God alone. God and humanity keep making history together, and the finest flower of this covenant pedagogy is Christ.

The Divine Teacher, who is also the model patriot, teaches us in his Gospel the word that makes us contemporary men and women for every moment. Christ has left us Christians a mystique, and I want it to be the mystique of each one of us. Christ had total confidence in the Father, and he taught us to have the same confidence: «Don't you see how my Father cares for the lilies in the fields and the birds of the sky? No leaf falls from the trees and no hair falls from your head to the ground without my Father's consent» (Luke 12:7,27). What absolute trust the Lord had! But he was not a passivist; he felt responsible, along with his Father, for history. He made a commitment to history, identifying with the poor of his people and experiencing their lives. He sought to harmonize his people's history with the desires of his Father: not what he, the Son, wanted but what the Father wanted. That's why when they tried to hurry him, he said, «The hour has not yet come» (John 2:4). Christ moved in marvelous harmony, always seeking the desire, the opening, the moment of the Father. He awaited his hour.

Another thing that we often forget during this time of liberation is a lesson Christ taught his people: their suffering would be redeemed only by suffering, not just by shouting about human rights. Suffering is redeemed by personal commitment to pain and suffering. It's often said that people sin because they suffer, but it's the other way around: they suffer because they sin. All those things that form the backdrop of our country crisis—suffering, slavery, poverty, illiteracy, hunger, marginalization, social injustice—they are the product of sin, and sin is redeemed only with reparation. There is no redemption unless it is by the agonizing death of Christ on the cross. That is why the Lord teaches us that salvation comes not by demagogical outcries and violent acts that do nothing but make demands; rather, it comes by taking on the people's suffering, not passively but actively, and endowing it with the sense of redemption. Suffering is the greatest force and we are wasting it.

So I am pleased today to open up the pages of the Sacred Scriptures to Saint Mark, who has almost finished his mission as our guide during this whole year. He places us in the days before Christ's passion, at a moment when Christ was arguing with his angry adversaries and explaining to them his vision, his life, the meaning of redemption. In order to shed more light on this part of Christ's life, the liturgy takes a complementary passage from the Old Testament and also a passage from the letters of the apostles, the disciples who had direct experience of the Lord's teaching and have transmitted his thinking to us in what is called the biblical tradition. Don't let people say we Catholics don't read the Bible. Not only do we read it, but we analyze it, we celebrate it, we incarnate it, and we want to make it our life. This is precisely the aim of the homily: to incarnate the word of God in the people. The homily is not being «political» when it points out political, social, and economic sins. It is simply the word of God becoming incarnate in our reality, which often reflects not God's reign but sin. The word of God tells people what the true paths of redemption are.

In today's three readings I find what might serve as a title for my homily: «The Three Christian Forces That Will Forge the Liberation of Our People». In today's word we find Christ offering us three forces that will free this country from the current crisis. Let us hope that all of us—rulers and ruled, poor and rich, organized and unorganized—feel strongly the

need to become architects of our own history. No one should be passive, nor should anyone be «activist» because if the Lord does not build the civilization, then all the organizations labor in vain. All the forces that people believe to be definitive and decisive will be a waste of time. What are the three forces Christ offers us? First, the spirit of poverty; second, the sense of God; and third, hope in the mystery of Christ.

### **The spirit of poverty**

The spirit of poverty. Today's gospel highlights the delightful figure of a poor widow. While the rich folk were contributing to the temple from their surplus, she was giving her whole livelihood, the only two coins she had for her sustenance. Christ stood amazed: «She has contributed much more than the others because they have given from their surplus, but she has given the only thing she had to keep herself alive» (Mark 12:43-44). This is the contrast Jesus Christ wanted to highlight.

In studying Christ's life, dear sisters and brothers, we should notice one thing that bothered him throughout his whole ministry: whenever he could, he tried to expose his enemies, especially the ones who were hypocrites. That's why, when he witnessed that authentic gesture of poverty, he contrasted it with the self-sufficient pride of the powerful. When people boast of their wealth, even if they're ministers of the church, then they're worshipping money as an idol.

What is most noteworthy in this passage about the widow who gave everything she had? Just that: she gave everything. The spirit of poverty is not disposing of what is superfluous. Poverty means giving, and not only giving, but giving oneself. Poverty means self-giving, having nothing, wanting only God as an absolute; it means not placing trust in the things of earth. That's where we find the sinfulness of wealth. It's not that wealth is bad, for God has created it! But as Saint Paul says, wealth must be used as a means for the kingdom of God (1 Tim 6:17-18). And Jesus said, «Make friends for yourselves with your riches so that when you die you will be received into the eternal home» (Luke 16:9). Those who administer wealth wisely do not give in the proud way of those who give only from their surplus; rather, along with their donations they give also from their hearts and their lives. They give fraternally and not paternalistically, as the Council advises, «Do not give as charity that which is owed in justice» (AA 8). The wealthy often sponsor Christmas parties or birthday parties with piñatas; they think they're being wonderful benefactors by throwing a little party, but they're not even paying a just wage to their workers! They want to give as charity what is already owed in justice. Even giving what is due in justice is not enough; we must give with love; we must feel that we are sisters and brothers with our workers. All those who share the gift of life with us should share also in the good things that God gives us to make our lives happy. This is the great transformation that we need in our time, but it requires profound faith in the one and only Absolute.

The poor widow enhances her worship of God with her poverty. Alms like hers are the ones that reach to the very throne of God. God does not need our money, but when the money that is given contains the whole of one's heart and one's love, then God is properly praised. In this way money can be converted into praise of the Lord, but for the widow this meant great confidence in the Lord: «I won't be in need. If I give two coins to the Lord, owner of all things, how can he deny me what I might have bought with them?» The widow was happy because she trusted in the one and only Absolute.

In contrast, Christ talked about how other people, like the self-sufficient Pharisees and scribes, showed off their elaborate robes in the marketplaces. Even worse, they took advantage of worship for pillage, deceiving widows and using long prayers to rob them (Mark 12:38-40). Christ uses strong words here, but they apply even to us, the ministers of the church, because we also, with all these priestly vestments, can cease to be intercessors before God and turn instead to sins of pride, arrogance, and vanity. You priests must be careful with those vestments and all the dignity that goes with your priesthood! The superior status that comes with your leadership role—which you share with political, economic, and social leaders—should not be a privilege but a service.

So we must be converted, dear sisters and brothers, myself first of all. We must be convinced that our lives and all the good things the Lord has given us—including our opportunity for study and the other economic, political, social, and religious opportunities we have—all must be for the Lord's service.

Parallel to this example from the gospel we have the delightful reading about the meeting of the prophet Elijah with another woman, the widow of Zarephath, who called Elijah «the man of God» (1 Kings 17:24). The poor widow believed what the man of God told her because he spoke in the name of the Lord. When he asked her for some food, she told him, «I have only a little wheat and a little oil. I was just now preparing the oven to make a little bread for me and my son. We will eat it, and then there's no more. We are going to die of hunger». But the man of God said, «By no means. Trust in God. Bake the bread you are preparing, and give me a share» (1 Kings 17:11-13).

This widow, like the widow in the gospel, gave up the little bread she had for her own sustenance—there was no more. But God blessed the faith of the prophet and the trust of the widow. «The Lord has spoken», said the prophet, and the widow believed the Lord. That is true poverty: possessing nothing but still having what is best: trust in God. And then there was bread. Neither bread nor oil was lacking during that dreadful drought that afflicted the land of Palestine, where many people died of hunger because of lack of rain and lack of crops. But these poor folk who trusted in God had what they needed (1 Kings 17:14-16).

What does poverty mean, dear sisters and brothers, in light of these superb examples that the Sacred Scriptures have given us today? Listen to this definition of Puebla: «For Christians the term “poverty” does not mean simply the kinds of privation and marginalization from which we must free ourselves. It also means a way of life that was already in evidence in Old Testament times, in the people who were known as “the poor of Yahweh”». That's what the Bible called them: «the poor of God». «The Gospel requires this way of life of all those who believe in Christ, and for that reason we call it “evangelical poverty”. Saint Paul explained this teaching by saying that Christians should use the goods of this world (whose structures are transitory) without absolutizing them, for they are only a means for reaching the kingdom» (P 1148). Quite simply, then, poverty means not making wealth an absolute but giving it instead a relative value and recognizing God alone as the absolute owner of all things.

The Council also states, «Commitment to the poor and the oppressed and the rise of base communities have helped the church to discover the evangelizing potential of the poor. For the poor constantly challenge the church and summon her to conversion; many poor people incarnate in their lives the evangelical values of solidarity, service, simplicity, and

openness to receiving God's gift» (P 1147). The poor give us a mission. For the church the poor are an inspiration and a call to conversion. The church preaches the Gospel to the poor, as Christ said (Luke 4:18), because the poor evangelize the church in turn. The poor are the forgers of our history.

«Evangelical poverty combines the attitude of trusting confidence in God with a simple, sober, and austere life that dispels temptations to envy and pride» (P 1149). The evil aspect of our enslavement is revealed by our envy and pride. These vices are not present only in those who have money; poor people who are not really poor also have them. They are also present in those who have the idea that they are liberating the poor but are themselves greedy and envious and proud. «Evangelical poverty cannot be imposed as a practice; it must be practiced out of love so that the abundance of some may remedy the needs of others» (P 1150).

I believe these reflections are sufficient. I would now just like to explain why the spirit of poverty is so necessary at the present time. I'm going to borrow from the thought of Pope Paul VI, who said that the most important virtues for the present historical moment are charity and poverty. In analyzing poverty, he spoke about the «inner freedom that results from evangelical poverty» (ES 28). No one is as truly free as the person who is poor in spirit, the person who is not attached to wealth nor makes it an idol—that is inner freedom.

«Evangelical poverty gives us freedom of spirit and makes us more sensitive to the human aspects of economic questions and better able to understand them» (ES 28). The poor do not deny that money is needed for progress, but they know how to evaluate that progress. Progress should not result in humiliation for poor people while serving only the needs of the privileged; it should truly be for all the children of God.

The freedom of spirit that comes from evangelical poverty «gives wealth and progress the just and rightful values they deserve» (ES 28). There is no need to worship progress as if we couldn't live without it. We must keep in mind that God is primary and that after God come human beings. If progress distances itself from God or if it alienates, mutilates, or abuses human beings, then it is not true progress. Only those who have a spirit of poverty will know how to give supremacy to God and to human beings as the key agents for all civilization. Progress is not about having great buildings, great airports, or great highways, especially if these are used only by a privileged minority and not by the people by whose blood all those things are built. (Applause)

Poverty also makes us more fit to «give greater and more generous care to the needy» (ES 28). Nobody understands a poor person as well as another poor person. Even when people are truly poor, the love they give helps them understand and makes them solicitous and generous toward those who suffer greater need.

Finally, the spirit of poverty «makes us desire that wealth be used justly and equitably for the good of all and distributed with greater foresight, instead of being a source of conflict, selfishness, and pride among people» (ES 28).

These are the pope's words about the spirit of poverty. I therefore conclude this reflection, sisters and brothers, by issuing a call at this moment when a new process is beginning in the country. Let us all encourage the process, especially since much is being said about a counter-coup being promoted by the right.

It's natural that when the rich feels that their economic privileges are being threatened, they will move heaven and earth in order to maintain their idol of wealth. We pray to God that this will not happen. We pray that they will hear this call of God's word which proclaims the absolute value of God over all idols. May we realize that there is no greater freedom than having our hearts detached from earthly things and that there is no more shameful underdevelopment than coveting things and making life consist in having more and more and not realizing that the real ideal consists in simply being, in being Christian, in being God's, and in giving everything else a relative value.

I speak once again to those persons who are still kneeling before the idol of their money: detach yourselves from it quickly out of love before they take it away from you by violence! (Applause) This is the danger of the extreme right, and not only of the extreme right. My vision is a pastoral one; I am preaching the message of the Gospel. With Christ I say that the great danger for true civilization is excessive love of earthly goods. The stories of these two widows and the prophet Elijah are eloquent calls from God, and they come at an opportune moment for El Salvador, which needs detachment in order to have freedom. We need freedom of the heart in order to work for the true liberation of our people.

### **The sense of God**

As the second thought for today I'm going to meditate on what the Scriptures tell us about the sense of God. I already hinted at it when I repeated the words of Jesus Christ: «You cannot serve two lords—you cannot be a servant of God and a servant of money. Either you will serve one and despise the other, or you will serve the other and despise the first» (Matt 6:24). When are we going to understand?

The other day we asked a man who was advocating political liberation, «What does the church mean for you?» His reply was scandalous: «The thing is, there are two churches, the church of the rich and the church of the poor. We believe in the church of the poor, but we don't believe in the church of the rich». (Applause) Naturally, that is a demagogical phrase. I will never allow for a division in the church. There is only one church, the church that Christ preached, the church that must give with all her heart. Those who call themselves Catholic while adoring their riches and refusing to be detached from them are not even Christian; they have not understood the call of the Lord. They are not church. The rich people who are on their knees before their money are idolaters, even if they go to Mass and perform pious acts. They are not Christian if they have not banished the idol of money from their hearts. There is only one church, the one that adores the true God and knows how to give things their relative value.

This is essentially what the sense of God consists of. This widow showed an attitude of devotion by contributing to temple worship with her small alms. She knew that worship did not consist in giving money but in spiritual sacrifice, in giving oneself to God. This is what caught Christ's attention: «This woman has given everything she had because she trusts in God, and God will not fail her» (Mark 12:44).

The aim of the other people in the temple was to seek to make themselves known and also to use their long prayers to practice fraud (Mark 12:38-40). What a disgrace when a religious service is made into a means for earning money! There's no scandal more horrible! So

I call on my dear fellow priests, on Catholic institutions, on congregations and schools, on everything that calls itself Catholic and seeks to be church: be very careful not to fall under this curse of Jesus Christ! For he lashed out fiercely when he beheld the example of the widow's authentic devotion and compared it to the attitude of the false religious leaders whose bombastic speech and exterior display concealed the evil intentions they carried within.

The two Old Testament figures, Elijah and the widow of Zarephath, are also examples of obedience to God. Elijah was called a «man of God», and that is indeed a beautiful title for a prophet (1 Kings 17:24). And because he was a man of God, his words also gave the poor widow a sense of God. She trusted in God and by her poverty pledged devotion to the prophet who spoke in the name of God.

This is the greatness that belongs to us also as ministers of God. I thank you, beloved faithful, for the respect and affection you have for God's ministers, your priests. Let us hope that we know now how to respond always as Elijah did, surrendering ourselves simply to God and identifying with the problems of all of you. In this way we will experience a reality that becomes bright only when it is oriented toward God. May all of us—you as the people of God and we as ministers of God—orient our activities and our lives toward God, for only from God will come all the resources we need for political, social, and economic solutions. This is a propitious moment in El Salvador, a favorable time for all of us to orient our hopes and concerns toward the all-powerful God. Amid all our work for liberation, in all our efforts to free the people from their servitude, crisis, and violence, let us realize that God alone has the key. Like Christ, we wait on his will, and we watch his hand, which will indicate to us the hour. Let us strive to be faithful to him!

I want our people to discover God in the same way that the Council advised for those who govern. As it came to an end, the Council sent messages to various social groups, one of which was to the rulers of nations. If you rulers are listening to me, hear these words of the church's universal magisterium, transmitted through this humble means. The Council tells you to respect your laws and your authority with these words: «We have a sacrosanct word to speak to you, and it is this: only God is great. God alone is the beginning and the end. God alone is the source of your authority and the foundation of your laws. Your task is to be promoters of world order and peace among peoples. But never forget this: it is God, the living and true God, who is the Father of all men and women»<sup>1</sup>. I exhort the authorities of our country to be truly a reflection of the fatherhood of God. We have suffered enough, and the people are totally exhausted and wounded. They need authorities that are a true reflection of the fatherly God who cannot stand to have his children punished so.

A people who sees its authorities acting with loving concern for justice, peace, and order will be a happy people because authority makes it possible for them to rise up toward the true God. When we were being criticized for our denunciations and being reminded that all authority comes from God, we responded with words that we now repeat with equal conviction, «Yes, all authority comes from God (Rom 13:1), and that is why those who have authority must use it as God desires. But when authority is not used as God desires, it does not come from God. It is then an offense against God that requires the response the apostles gave to the authorities: "We must obey God rather than men. God must be obeyed"» (Acts 5:29).

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<sup>1</sup> «Message to Rulers», Second Vatican Council, 8 December 1965, 2 and 3.

Let us therefore discover God in our history. This is the marvelous way Christians have of finding God. Hear what Puebla has to say: «The citizens of the people of God must make their way upon earth, but they must do so as citizens of heaven who have their hearts fixed on God through prayer and contemplation. Such an attitude does not involve flight from earthly reality; rather, it is the condition for fruitful commitment to human welfare. Those who have not learned to honor the will of the Father in the silence of prayer will have great difficulty in doing so when the call of solidarity demands of them renunciation, suffering, and humiliation» (P 251).

The Christian heart gives birth to a marvelous harmony between heaven and earth, and the more completely it is engrossed by God's heaven, the more deeply it will sink into the history of earth. That's why I insist on the need for much prayer. Let us pray, but not with prayer that alienates, not with prayer that makes us flee from reality. Let us come to church to gather strength and clarity so that we can return to the world and better perform the duties of the home, the duties of politics, the duties of organization—and so give a wholesome orientation to these earthly things. In this way we will be the true liberators.

### **Hope in the mystery of Christ**

Let us pass now to my third and final thought, which provides the light we need to bring our reflection to culmination in the one who became mediator between God and humankind. As I've said, the three forces that will bring liberation to our country are the spirit of poverty, the sense of God, and great hope in the mystery of Christ. I am inspired by the passage of the letter to the Hebrews, which presents Jesus Christ to us as the priest who has entered heaven to take possession of the definitive altar of glory: «Christ has not entered into a sanctuary made by human hands but into heaven itself, and he stands before God interceding for us» (Heb 9:24). This passage alludes to the Old Testament ceremony whereby once a year the high priest entered the Holy of Holies to offer a sacrifice that was different from the sacrifices offered every day on the altar. But Saint Paul insists, «It was not that way with Christ. Christ appeared just once, at the culminating moment of history, in order to destroy sin by sacrificing himself» (Heb 9:26). That was his destiny. Christ offered only one sacrifice, the sacrifice that culminated with his death on Calvary, and that sacrifice was accepted by God and ratified by the resurrection. Therefore that death and resurrection are the culmination of all history. If peoples and individuals are to be saved, it is because salvation flows from that death and that resurrection. That is why we Christians know that the transformation of our country is already decreed in Christ the Redeemer. We Christians know that, as horrifying as the darkness hovering over the world may now be, a new day of bright redemption has been dawning since the time when Christ died and rose. That is what we call the paschal mystery: the death and resurrection of Christ. That is the paschal mystery, the mystery of Passover and Easter.

The Jewish Passover was celebrated as an anticipation of Easter, of the passage from death to life that appears in Christ. This liberation was already foreshadowed when the people were freed from slavery in Egypt and introduced into the freedom of the children of God in the Promised Land. Their journey was a symbol of the pilgrimage we Christians make as we journey through the desert of life toward the land of eternal promise. Ours is not a liberation that exists only beyond history; it is already reflected here within history because here is the seed, here is the ferment, here is the tomb, here is the cross, here in our history are the place and the time where Christ died. The culminating moment of that sacrifice that is life and resurrection now gives meaning to all liberation movements.



Therefore, if any political organization or movement proclaims liberation without Christ, without Passover, without cross, then it is not true liberation. The only true liberators are the ones I am describing now with the words of Puebla: they are the ones who emerge from «the church, the forger of the liberators of history» (P 274). The only liberators are those who have in their hearts faith and hope in the death of Christ, who saved the world by paying for the sins of humankind and who rose never to die again. Christ offers real freedom and the dignity of being God's children to those who have renounced sin and professed the truth of human dignity. They will be the only true liberators.

Dear sisters and brothers, I would like to emphasize this thought of Puebla: «Our continent needs men and women who realize that God is calling them to act in alliance with him. He needs people with docile hearts who are able to follow the ways and the rhythms of Providence» (P 279). I would like to place strong emphasis on this, perhaps because the words may cause scandal, just as Saint Paul called the cross a «scandal» for Greeks and Jews (1 Cor 1:23). Suffering and the cross appear scandalous and humiliating, but Puebla tells us that our continent hopes to find men and women who are «especially able to bear with their own suffering and the suffering of our peoples so as to convert them, with an Easter spirit, into a demand for personal conversion, into a source of solidarity with all those who share this suffering, and into a challenge for creative initiative and imagination» (P 279).

Our Easter hope gives special meaning to those who are marginalized and illiterate, those who are dying of malnutrition. Not only does our hope cry out that this situation is intolerable, but it tells those who are suffering, «Even if you die this way, offer it as redemption». That is why I told you, in my pastoral statement about the new situation in the country<sup>2</sup>, that all those who have offered their lives, their heroism, their sacrifices—if they have truly offered them out of a sincere desire to obtain true liberty and dignity for our people—are incorporated into the great sacrifice of Christ. That's the way it has to be, taking on pain as the price for buying freedom. It's not a question of shaking off the yoke but of imitating Christ, who submitted to the Roman yoke and suffered oppression under Pontius Pilate. He died on the cross beneath the mighty machinery of the empire, but he died with a cry of love because he had redeemed the world by accepting pain and humiliation. At that moment there began to shine the tremendous freedom that is given to all peoples. All of us who desire liberation bear within us that same Christ, and we must try to experience that reality intensely, sisters and brothers.

I send out a call through the radio to all those who are sick in bed, to the hospitals, to the poor who can't leave their huts because they can't afford even to pay for transport. Offer your situation to the Lord not in a passive way but with faith in the omnipotent action of suffering. Unite it with Christ who redeems by his cross and his death. Then you will see, beloved poor, beloved oppressed, beloved outcasts, beloved hungry, beloved sick—then you will see that the dawn of resurrection is already shining forth. This hour must come also for our own people, sisters and brothers. As Christians we must await the dawn not only in the uncertain circumstances of politics but in the sure dimensions of faith and hope. That is the mission I am carrying out, and that is why my message seeks to promote hope and faith in Jesus Christ.

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<sup>2</sup> «A Pastoral Call Regarding the New Situation of the Country», 16 October 1979, in *Orientación* (21 October 1979).

That is also why Saint Paul associates the deaths of all of us with that redeeming death of Christ. Quite strong are his words today: «The destiny of human beings is to die only once, and after death comes judgment» (Heb 9:27). Blessed are the deaths that are absorbed into the redeeming death of Christ! For with pain and sadness I have to tell you: not all deaths are redeeming deaths. There are suicidal deaths. There are deaths that result from foolish provocation. There are the deaths of those who die hating, with weapons in their hands. There are deaths of vengeance. Those are not redeeming deaths. The redeeming deaths are those of persons who have learned to say with Christ at the moment of the final spasm, «Father, forgive them, they know not what they do» (Luke 23:34). (Applause)

So that is why Saint Paul summons us to incorporate our life and our death into the life and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. Don't believe that doing this will leave us alienated. A thousand times I must repeat this because a thousand times we hear the calumny that we Christians forget about the problems of earth because we're thinking about eternal life. To the contrary, by thinking of eternal life we show the true dimensions of earthly problems. We who know the unlimited dimensions of eternity understand the limited projections of this world.

### **Life of the church**

We now have at hand, sisters and brothers, the elements necessary for analyzing the whys and wherefores of our history. I am happy to be doing this reflection in the bosom of our church, summoning all those who are truly worthy members of this people of God. May our archdiocese be daily more identified with pastoral ideals that enable us all to carry out our political mission according to our individual vocations. But in a country as politicized as El Salvador we run the risk of believing that the only valid human dimension is the political one. This is a great mistake. Politics is one dimension of being human, but it is not the only one. What makes us most human is what we are reflecting now; it is what comes from God and makes us truly a receptacle of God. Once we have received God, we can shed light on our family affairs as well as on political, social, and economic affairs. Politics is just one of our many concerns, not the only one. That's why my aim in preaching is to allow the word of God to throw light on what is of concern to each one of us.

We therefore want to experience reality as God's people. Today the parish of San Martín is celebrating the bishop who is their patron saint. After this Mass I'll have the pleasure of going there to celebrate with those Christians the feast of their patron, who no doubt can understand our situation well since he experienced something very similar. Martin was the son of a soldier, and he himself served in the army of the Roman empire, but he never lost his Christian heart. He sought Christ while still a soldier. Once a poor man who was dying of cold asked him for alms. This captain of the Roman empire cut his cloak in two and gave half to the beggar; the other half he kept for himself. The next night he had a dream: Christ himself appeared clothed in the half-cloak and said, «Martin, you gave me this gift». How wonderful it is when Christ is seen in the poor! This man, even as a soldier, was a Christian, and he loved the people, the poor, the suffering. (Applause)

The vicariate of La Libertad will be having a study session on the fourth pastoral letter this coming Saturday at El Calvario in Santa Tecla. The priests of the vicariate of Mejicanos made their spiritual exercises this week. I'm delighted with these spiritual

endeavors of our clergy. May the prayers of the faithful enhance these efforts so that we become truly what we must be: priests for this present time.

Since I could not go to their meeting personally, I received telephone greetings from the National Council of Christian Churches in the United States, and they asked me to communicate them to the whole of this beloved community. They also told me that possibly next Sunday an envoy from that council will be with us—the pastor, Doctor Jorge Lara Braud. Next Sunday, God willing, we will share this celebration with him.

I would like to clarify one point. There has been considerable publicity given to news about my receiving a death threat, and I want to thank people for the solidarity they've shown. I also want to share with you some commentaries so that you can judge for yourselves. People ask me, «Why does the publicity stress that the threat against your life is coming from the extreme left? Might it not be a maneuver of the extreme right? Could it be that they just want you to leave the scene?» I leave those questions unanswered. I have indeed stated that, if I am in danger, it could be from either extreme; I'm a bother to both of them. (Applause) But I want to assure you—and I ask your prayers so that I will be faithful to this promise—that I will not abandon my people. I will assume with them all the risks that my ministry demands of me. (Applause)

We send greetings to the new rector of the Universidad José Simeón Cañas, Father Ignacio Ellacuría, who has taken the place of Professor Román Mayorga. In this regard I want to recall the ideal the church has for her universities, namely, to institutionalize dialogue between the church and the culture of the people. Let us hope that the UCA will always maintain this dialogue between the church's faith and the culture of our Salvadoran people.

Next Friday, November 16, in this basilica we will hold a prayer vigil for peace. The Blessed Sacrament will be exposed in the morning, and at twelve noon Mass will be offered for peace in our country. I invite all the communities to participate in this Mass. Again, this Friday at noon.

I received a donation from Madre Marie Paul School for YSAX. While on this theme, I want to thank as well all the persons and institutions that are helping us to sustain this radio station, which aims to be a cultural station since it has been deprived of commercial support. Even if we could now find such support, we want to maintain our independence, and we *will* if Catholics are willing to help support YSAX as a cultural station. (Applause)

I also want to appeal to you to help us to sustain our newspaper, *Orientación*. Let us thank God that we also have this written medium. Circumstances oblige us to raise the price—it will now cost twenty cents—since it is sustained only with the support of those who buy it. I want to thank the post office because now *Orientación* is reaching all subscribers. We forgive them the previous problems of distribution. Also, regarding the people who previously didn't read *Orientación* because it was considered subversive material if they were found with it—they should no longer be afraid. As long as a little bit of freedom is being allowed, take advantage of it so that this medium of the church's thinking can circulate.

While reflecting on the church as the people of God, let us raise our eyes to the pope. He sent an envoy to Iran on behalf of the hostages in the United States embassy, but I heard this morning that the pope's intervention was rejected. It is sad to see that the church's

intervention is being rejected in the ministries here as well in Iran; it's regrettable since she simply wants to deliver a message of reason and peace<sup>3</sup>.

This week the pope also presided over a very unusual meeting of the cardinals, something that hasn't happened for centuries. The cardinals make up the pope's senate. They are men from different parts of the world who advise him regarding governance of the universal church. The themes of the meeting were treated with great secrecy, but they seemed to refer to the Roman curia, the church's relation to modern cultures, and the problem of finances<sup>4</sup>. It appears that there are great deficits in the church. Let us keep this in mind since we are so prone to murmuring about the church's wealth. The church is in fact poor and yet must maintain very costly missionary, cultural, and other kinds of works. She uses money for the betterment of people's lives. The spirit of poverty that we have spoken about doesn't mean not using money. The church has money, and she must use it for purposes of evangelization.

The pope spoke about love and self-control, and I want to echo these words of the Holy Father. He stated that these two virtues, love and self-control, are needed for responsible parenthood. Men and women know that fertility is a gift of God and that it must be treated in a virtuous manner and not just as instinct or passion. These two things, love and self-control, «require a joint decision on the part of spouses, as well as their determination to submit to the doctrine of faith and the teaching of the church»<sup>5</sup>. The pope said that «the teaching of the church should not be interpreted in evasive ways»<sup>6</sup>. The teaching is clear, but contraceptives and other methods are often justified by many moral evasions. The pope said the church's doctrine should not be interpreted with evasions. What Pope Paul VI said in the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* is clear. Pope John Paul expressed his sincere gratitude to the experts of the International Federation of Family Planning who were visiting him, and he thanked them for their efforts to determine scientifically the periods when matrimonial relations are allowed even though the woman is infertile. This is the only birth control allowed in matrimonial relations, not the artificial means.

I want to take note also of the attitude of the Catholic Church in Bolivia, which has called for dialogue between the two sides in the conflict there. The church commission, formed by two bishops and a priest, has urged the parties at odds to do everything possible to seek dialogue. If a solution is not found, it will be due, sadly, to the interests that have been created. Thus, the church calls on the members of that nation's armed forces, on the members of the national parliament, on all the members and leaders of the political parties, and on everyone who can contribute to resolving the crisis, to be true to their values in working for a solution<sup>7</sup>. I think the situation there is the same as we have here. It's not the church that must

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<sup>3</sup> The Ministry of the Economy and the Ministry of Labor and Social Security were occupied by members of the People's Revolutionary Bloc demanding lower prices for basic products and an increase in the minimum wage. During the occupation they held several workers and civil servants as hostages.

<sup>4</sup> JOHN PAUL II, «Discourse at the Closing of the Plenary Meeting of the College of Cardinals», 9 November 1979, in *L'Osservatore Romano* (23 December 1979).

<sup>5</sup> JOHN PAUL II, «Discourse to Delegates of the Research Team Liaison Center and Members of the Administrative Council of the International Federation of Family Action», 3 November 1979, in *L'Osservatore Romano* (23 December 1979).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> On 1 November 1979 Colonel Alberto Natusch Busch carried out a coup d'état in Bolivia against the constitutional government of Walter Guevara Arce. The Bolivian Workers Union rejected the coup and called a general strike which paralyzed the country. *El Diario de Hoy* (2 and 8 November 1979).

offer concrete options, but she must summon all the people to organize and make their voice heard. It has to be the people, all of you, who construct your own society.

The Holy See has recognized the governing junta of El Salvador. We should interpret this friendly gesture of the Holy See in the same way as we do the pope's other diplomatic moves, which always seek to maintain friendship and preserve whatever is Christian and good. In doing this, the pope does not submit to foreign ideologies but keeps a channel open for communicating his own thought with complete freedom. I recall the time when our ambassador to the Holy See heard the pope demand freedom for the Salvadoran church and also respect for the Christian community<sup>8</sup>.

I also want to share the joy of Archbishop Obando of Managua, who celebrated Mass after returning from Austria, where he had been honored. His statements seem to me very fitting for our own situation in El Salvador. He said that we need to live our lives not as lakes but as rivers. Keep in mind the scenic geography of Nicaragua, which is a land of lakes. The bishop went on to say, «We shouldn't be lakes because lakes are selfish. They like to receive the rain from heaven and the water from rivers, but they don't like to give it up. In contrast, wherever rivers flow, they leave something of themselves behind, and there we find bread. At this time we must unite together in the work of reconstruction. Let no one remain alone. Trees that are isolated dry up with the heat of the sun; the wind strips them of their leaves and their branches. Instead of rising up high, they gradually bend down toward earth. Let us not be solitary trees and plants. Rather, let us be united, even if we're small and unimportant. The sparrows and the swallows flock together in order to save themselves from the birds of prey». It was a fine talk. (Applause)

### **Events of the week**

With respect to civil society here in our country, you all know already that an agreement was reached between the junta and the People's Revolutionary Bloc and that the occupation of the ministries has ceased. That makes me happy since it brings peace to many homes, but I repeat that that organization should give serious consideration to actions of that kind that desecrate very sacred human rights. There are stories about what happened there inside, but I don't want to judge.

I would also like to say that if there is going to be a justice commission made up of honest persons, then they should dedicate themselves not only to studying the cases of the disappeared persons but also to bring about justice in the countless kidnappings, murders, and occupations we have witnessed. All these violations are concerned with the same rights as the disappeared persons have. Let there be total clarity. (Applause)

Concerning the occupations, even those of us who are responsible for the churches have many complaints and regrets. They cause us much harm. I repeat again that occupying churches is not appropriate as long as people can protest in the plazas and march through the streets. Taking refuge in the churches seems scatter-brained. The same people who criticize priests, saying they just stay in the sacristy, are occupying the churches and don't want to leave. (Applause)

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<sup>8</sup> PAUL VI, «Discourse to the Ambassador of El Salvador in the Vatican», in *L'Osservatore Romano* (18 December 1979).

I'm also happy that some labor conflicts have been resolved by means of reason and dialogue, such as in the case of the coffee processors. How wonderful it would be if we truly entered into a period of reason and dialogue! By talking together we can reach an understanding even while holding very different positions.

I'm pleased also with certain signs of an easing of tensions. Something new is happening in the country when a decree is issued dissolving ORDEN<sup>9</sup> and when some people have the courage to state in the papers that maintaining ORDEN was costing 22,000 *colones* a month and that there are also certain anomalies in the lottery<sup>10</sup>. And who knows how many other things there are! I want to congratulate the government for excising this very dangerous tumor in our country. It was about time. (Applause)

I want to remind you of what I wrote a year ago in my third pastoral letter when referring to the people's right to organize, especially the *campesinos*:

Even without going into further details, we cannot ignore the tragic spectacle in our country of organizations composed basically of *campesinos* who are in conflict with one another and have recently even resorted to violence. What is most disturbing is that they are being disunited and thrust into conflict by forces that are not even basically ideological. It is not the case that the majority of the members of these organizations think differently regarding peace, work, or family. The saddest thing is that our rural folk are being divided precisely by that which unites them most profoundly: poverty itself, the very need to survive, the need to provide bread, education, and health for their children and their homes. What is happening is that, in trying to escape from that same misery, they are allowing themselves to be seduced by the advantages offered them by pro-government organizations. These in turn use the *campesinos* to carry out various repressive activities that regularly include betraying, threatening, kidnapping, torturing, and in some cases killing their fellow *campesinos*. Meanwhile, other *campesinos* are active in organizations independent of the government or opposed to it, searching for more effective ways to change their precarious situation<sup>11</sup>.

At this point in my letter I took the opportunity to say that people should not confuse the Christian organization of ecclesial base communities with either of these kinds of organizations. The base communities come together to reflect on the word of God and to incarnate that word in our reality. The word always promotes our Christian awareness of the need to work for a more just nation according to concrete political options inspired by faith and conscience.

I want to tell you, sisters and brothers, that the whole business of ORDEN was a tragedy; it caused a tragic division among our *campesinos*. Let us hope that my rejoicing over this government decision doesn't bring cruel consequences. In last Wednesday's dialogue I

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<sup>9</sup> On 6 November 1979 the Revolutionary Governing Junta decreed the dissolution of the Democratic Nationalist Organization (ORDEN), which was founded in 1966 by the government of Julio Adalberto Rivera. The main promoter of ORDEN was General José Alberto Medrano, then-director of the National Guard; he gave the organization a paramilitary structure, mainly based on district patrols made up of *campesinos* who controlled and repressed the rural population.

<sup>10</sup> *La Prensa Gráfica* (9 November 1979) and *El Diario de Hoy* (10 November 1979).

<sup>11</sup> *The Church and the People's Political Organizations* (6 August 1978) 33-35.

already made a call for us to keep the spirit of vengeance far from us. I now call upon the members of ORDEN to take advantage of this moment to be converted and reintegrated into society. And I call upon all of us to be ready to receive them. Just as the father and the brother received the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32), let us receive all those who have been the cause of suffering—but never with vengeance, always with love. This is what Christians do. (Applause)

That's why I also take delight in congratulating the Minister of Agriculture for promising to guarantee the right of the *campesinos* to organize<sup>12</sup>. This is simply compliance with the constitution, which defends the right of organization! (Applause) Let us hope that the nightmare we've experienced at the hands of ORDEN, with all their special privileges, is never again repeated in our history.

We've also heard reports about controlling the prices of basic consumer products<sup>13</sup>. I pray to God that these measures will be implemented. They are simple measures, but they touch the heart of the people deeply and find an echo in all Salvadorans. The order to post the prices of products in the stores must be obeyed. Sadly, though, the old saying is true: «Come the law, come the scam». May the Lord prevent swindlers from further exploiting the misery of our poor!

With regard to the minimum wage for harvesters, I hope that we will soon have just and equitable laws. I also call upon the producers, who have benefited from their crops for so long. If hard times come, let us face them all together. Now is not the time for there to be a few privileged folk as opposed to the others who make them privileged! Let us all rather understand that the God who makes fruitful our crops of coffee, cotton, cane, and all the rest is the Father of all Salvadorans. We must reflect his providence to the fullest extent that we can. The government must take care of organizing this by means of subsidies or taxes or other measures—that is not the role of the church. As a pastoral voice, however, the church will always insist on equality and justice for all our people.

They have also promised to decentralize municipal power with respect to the central government. Likewise, there will be a reorganization of the state agencies dealing with human development<sup>14</sup>. We hope that these promises also gradually crystallize.

The commission that will investigate the situation of political prisoners and disappeared persons has been formed, and yesterday was their first day of work<sup>15</sup>. Let us hope that they receive the information and everything else they need as a result of the collaboration of all involved. It would be good for them to keep in mind that what they must investigate above all is the identity of the persons most responsible for these captures. (Applause) Who ordered the arrests, who permitted the arrests? Also, who were ones who, like spectators in the Roman coliseum, took delight in the arrests, the disappearances, the tortures, and the

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<sup>12</sup> *La Prensa Gráfica* (6 November 1979).

<sup>13</sup> «Exposition of Román Mayorga Quirós, Member of the Revolutionary Governing Junta, on National Radio and Television», 8 November 1979, in *El Diario de Hoy* (10 November 1979).

<sup>14</sup> «Exposition of Colonel Adolfo Arnaldo Majano, Member of the Revolutionary Governing Junta on National Radio and Television», 8 November 1979, in *El Diario de Hoy* (10 November 1979).

<sup>15</sup> The Special Investigatory Commission for Political Prisoners and Disappeared Persons was sworn in on 7 November 1979; its members included Luis Alfonso Posada, representative of the Supreme Court of Justice; Roberto Suárez Suay, Attorney General of the Republic; and Roberto Lara Velado, president of the Human Rights Commission. *El Diario de Hoy*, (10 November 1979).

murders? They must hear the voice of justice! I was very happy to hear Colonel Majano announce that they were prepared even to ask for the extradition of the guilty parties<sup>16</sup>.

I call upon the security forces to act with a sense of justice and fraternity toward all their fellow compatriots so that we Salvadorans can discover the truth of this sad epoch of our history. We have repeated often that people should be encouraged to provide information in such a way that even those who are guilty can find nobility in accusing themselves and in encouraging others to do the same. This also is a matter of justice. Furthermore, those who have been arrested and tortured should not lend themselves to demagogical «shows» but should go to the courts and there make conscientious juridical statements that shed light on what has happened.

I continue to demand that the army be purged. I have confidence in the honesty of the young military officers who have opened this new horizon for the nation—may they maintain that spirit. What I understand by the purification of the army is not punishment of the lower ranks but investigation of those responsible for the actions of the soldiers. Certain commanding officers need to be changed if they are not in accord with the ideals of transforming the country.

In this regard I would also like to ask the commission—trusting always in the honesty of their work—to do everything possible to provide information about the most urgent cases, such as the one I've been denouncing for three weeks now, the sacristan of Soyapango. Nothing more is known of him. In this new period, however, I believe that justice must shine more brightly than it ever did before.

The Committee of Mothers<sup>17</sup> has started a hunger strike in the office of the sub-secretary of the Ministry of Justice, and the Committee for the Freedom Political Prisoners has done the same on the steps of the National Palace. Their demands are just, but we question whether their actions are opportune since there now exists a tribunal that provides a channel for airing these matters without demagogy. It would be sad if the pain of the mothers and the disappeared persons were being used for political ends; manipulating a thing as holy as that pain would be offensive. What I say, then, is that if the legal channels exist, then pressure is fine, but let the pressure be reasonable and not subject to improper manipulation. (Applause)

For her part, the church is providing every service she can through her Legal Aid Office. We have received a letter from the Special Investigatory Commission asking for the full collaboration of Legal Aid and also offering the commission's complete support for the work of Legal Aid. I am very happy with this. At long last the government is honoring a service that our church has been providing especially to the poorest and neediest people.

The Legal Aid Office has also been processing a series of letters that have reached me. Given this new breathing space in which people are free to talk a little more, these letters are denouncing the cases of many disappearances that were not denounced previously because of fear. Legal Aid has published all these cases on a page in *Orientación*, and I ask you to speak

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<sup>16</sup> These declarations actually correspond to the «Exposition of Guillermo Manuel Ungo, Member of the Revolutionary Governing Junta on National Radio and Television», 8 November 1979, in *El Diario de Hoy* (10 November 1979).

<sup>17</sup> Committee of Mothers of Political Prisoners and Disappeared Persons of El Salvador. *La Prensa Gráfica* (7 November 1979).



with our Legal Aid Office if there are more cases of this type. For example, there's the case of the youth, Humberto Antonio Lemus Molina, who was arrested on November 4 in Mejicanos, and there's also the labor conflict at APEX, which has continued now for two months without a reasonable solution in sight.

Several statements have been published which indicate an awakening of consciences among professionals and other sectors of our people, such as the mechanical, electrical, and industrial engineers<sup>18</sup>; the orthodontists and judges of the East<sup>19</sup>; and others as well. I have alluded previously to the statement of the medical doctors<sup>20</sup>; but I want to make special mention of it again in order to reaffirm my support for their recommendations for improving the health of the people. I would also urge them to examine their own fidelity to medical ethics, which demands that they care for life rather than destroy it. Above all, I was very happy that the Minister of Health has stated that he would not impose a system of contraception but would simply make information available and so respect the freedom of women and the family<sup>21</sup>. This seems to me to be a very Christian and very patriotic gesture. Here it suffices to repeat what we said previously, using the words of a medical student at the university, «Our people are being castrated!» Let us hope that the doctors and the Ministry of Health will provide assurances regarding this aspect of our people's health. For my part as pastor, I want to tell you men and women, as the ones responsible for procreation, that we should take seriously what the pope has said about «self-control as virtue». We already have the unseemly spectacle of so many children without fathers and also the tremendous problem of our demographic density.

With reference to the proclamation of the Human Rights Commission—I see many proclamations of human rights coming out these days—I would like to clarify something. The commission states that «these proposals outline a legitimate framework for the insurrectional process carried out by the armed forces, justifying the constitutionality of their action, but the people's rights in this regard are still not exhausted since the conditions grounding the right of insurrection have not disappeared». This assessment seems to me very dangerous, and I am not in agreement with it. The right of insurrection exists in the people whenever all other peaceful means of negotiation have been exhausted and when the evil that can be foreseen is not greater than the evil they are attempting to prevent. As I have said, there existed a right to insurrection, and the armed forces made legitimate use of it. Since the armed forces have opened a new path allowing for reasonable and peaceful negotiation, I do not believe that the right of insurrection exists as long as this capacity for dialogue is not exhausted. (Applause) As a messenger of peace who is fearful of further tragic bloodshed, I believe that it is very dangerous to be fomenting the right of insurrection when it does not exist in the practical order because now there is the possibility of dialogue and the people are being offered the assurances they desire. What I would call for is political and social pressure so that the promises become reality, but I definitely don't believe that a bloody insurrection would be legitimate at this time.

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<sup>18</sup> «Statement of the Board of Directors of the Salvadoran Association of Mechanical, Electrical, and Industrial Engineers (ASIMEI)» in *La Prensa Gráfica* (7 November 1979).

<sup>19</sup> «Joint Statement of the Eastern Association of Lawyers and the Eastern Society of Orthodontists», in *El Diario de Hoy* (9 November 1979).

<sup>20</sup> «Statement of the Medical College of El Salvador», in *El Diario de Hoy* (3 November 1979).

<sup>21</sup> *El Diario de Hoy* (5 November 1979).

Lastly, I want to express my joy at the liberation of the kidnap victims: Don Luis Escalante Arce<sup>22</sup> and the two North Americans, McDonald and Buchelli<sup>23</sup>. At the same time, I am sorry that Jaime Batlle and Jaime Hill<sup>24</sup> remain captive. In the name of the human rights we have been defending, I once again appeal to the captors of these two brothers of ours, that they quickly grant them the freedom that both they and their families so terribly need.

I'm going to conclude, dear sisters and brothers, by synthesizing my whole perspective. A bishop is not a politician or a political scientist but a pastor. I have received certain letters filled with criticism, and I have also been judged in ways that disregard statements I've made. It's as if I were involved in the current political workings of the country. I want to state that my perspective is pastoral and evangelical. I proclaim the kingdom of God, I approve of all that is in harmony with kingdom, and I denounce sin and all that is opposed to the kingdom. With this new development my judgment continues to be pastoral. I encourage a spirit of hope because I sincerely believe there is good reason for it. It has always been my work to maintain the hope of my people. If there is a spark of hope, my duty is to nourish it, and I believe that all people of goodwill must also do the same. (Applause)

My judgment is not political and much less opportunist. The church does not live by temporal events but by the great utopia beyond. As perfect as any political system may be, the church does not identify with it. She always criticizes it so that it will improve, and that's why the present development is not ensnaring the church. When some individuals say that the church has nothing useful to say and that she has already betrayed the people, they are maligning the church. They are incapable of seeing the new developments from a fresh perspective and want to reduce the concrete options to politics. (Applause) The people must be the architects of their own society. You have to create for yourselves the society that you want, whether it be democratic, socialist, or communist. It is you the people who must do this. What I am doing here, therefore, is challenging the political creativity of the people and their organizations. Let them speak the language of politics! Let them apply reasonable and intelligent pressure! The language of violence only provokes repression. (Applause) This is not the time for guerrillas. Guerilla warfare, clandestine activity, and the sowing of violence are out of place at this time when we are being summoned to open dialogue. The church has had a role of advocacy; she has been the voice of the voiceless, but now that you can speak, you are the ones who must speak while the church remains quiet. (Applause)

I make a fervent appeal to all those who can collaborate in the political education and organization of the people, without being limited just to the existing organizations. Be creative and realize that there are other voices and other things to be done. Together let us enrich the liberation process of our people. What is important is the liberation process of our people, not particular interests. The church understands the liberating energies that are imminent in all these movements, but the church's vision is much broader. From her perspective of transcendence the church knows how to give the people a just return on all their efforts.

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<sup>22</sup> President of the Banco Agrícola Comercial, kidnapped on 6 October 1979 by the FPL and freed on 4 November 1979. *La Prensa Gráfica* (5 and 6 November 1979).

<sup>23</sup> Executives of the firm ARSAL, kidnapped by the PRTC on 21 September 1979 and freed on 7 November 1979. *El Diario de Hoy* (8 November 1979).

<sup>24</sup> Salvadoran businessmen, kidnapped on 13 September and 31 October 1979 respectively.

So this is how I will conclude our homily. Our people will be made truly free by three Christian forces. First is the spirit of poverty. The more detached we are from earthly things and the less inclined to worship them, the freer we will be for carrying out the liberation struggles of our people. Second is the sense of God. Our people are very religious, and those who wish to use with them political strategies that are atheistic and lawless are not in tune with our people. Our people believe in God, and the more open we are to the Divine Absolute, the more capable we'll be of responding to earthly concerns. Christ knew how to be the great liberator because his heart was absorbed in his God. And the third force is our great hope in the death and resurrection of Christ, which gives liberating value to all our sorrows, illnesses, sufferings, and even death itself. Dying in Christ and living in Christ is the secret of the true liberator. Let it be so. (Applause)