

# THE CHURCH AND INTEGRAL DEVELOPMENT

**Twenty-eighth Sunday of Ordinary Time**  
**October 9, 1977**

*2 Kings 5:14-17*  
*2 Timothy 2:8-13*  
*Luke 17:11-19*

First of all, we want to thank the young men and women, members of the musical group from Santa Tecla, for their presence here this morning. We can truly feel the joy and the hope that these young people have in Christ. Each Sunday we have the opportunity to come to know these different musical groups that have an important role in the liturgy. At this time, we want to thank all those groups that have participated in this celebration and we invite those communities that have choirs to organize themselves and participate in this Mass, which is the primary Mass in the Archdiocese. The cathedral is a sign of unity and gathers together these voices that sing of God's glory throughout the Archdiocese.

## **Community notices**

Speaking of Santa Tecla, I want to remind you that this afternoon all the dynamic sectors of this community will gather together to plan a team approach to the pastoral ministry of this sector. Indeed, with the priests and religious and the schools, we already see such great life in this community. This meeting can produce wonderful things for the Church and can ultimately produce much good, not only for our ministry in the city but also for our ministry throughout the Archdiocese. Therefore, all of those persons who participated in the last meeting and all of those who are interested in working in the pastoral mission of the Church are invited to participate in this meeting that will take place at 3:00pm in the Escuela Masarello in Santa Tecla.

Continuing with news about the communities: I rejoice with the parishioners of San Francisco and Concepción who honored their patron, Saint Francis. I recognize the fervor of the priests and laity in these communities and I hope to see the same reality today when, after this Mass, I travel to Soyapango and celebrate the feast of the Virgin of the Rosary.

Father Samuel Orellana has been appointed pastor of Ayutuxtepeque. We will soon travel there to receive his first impressions. Next Sunday at 7:00pm, Father Próspero Díaz will be installed as the new pastor of Candelaria. The faith community of the Archdiocese will feel very present at the installation of Bishop Rivera as the ordinary of the Diocese of Santa Ana. This ceremony will take place on November 5<sup>th</sup>, at 10:00am. I invite everyone to participate in this celebration because I believe, like the early days of Christianity, when a member of one community is chosen by God to bring the gospel message to another community, the whole community feels united with this individual. We feel this way about

Bishop Rivera who was most active in this community of the Archdiocese. Now the whole Archdiocese will participate in this new responsibility of Bishop Rivera.

The community of the Church of Merced is in solidarity with their pastor, Father Torruella, who, as you know, was in an accident last week and both he and his mother are in the Polyclinic. We pray for their speedy recovery.

I am also happy to see that during these days, the communities of San Antonio in Colonia America, Santuario de Fátima in Los Planes and el Corazón de María have initiated work with the New Catechumenate Movement. The leadership is composed of Father José Angel (from Spain), Brother Tino and Lucía (from Italy). They have promoted this new style of religious formation. In former times, the candidates for Baptism were part of a school that was called the catechumenate. Unfortunately, we do not have this structure at the present time and as a result we have many persons who are baptized but do not live the responsibility or the glory of their baptism. This new catechumenate responds to the Vatican Council's desire to re-establish the catechumenate for those who are to be baptized (a). During the past weeks, the Catechumenate celebrated, in a solemn way, the presentation of Bibles to each candidate. I participated in some of these celebrations and it is very moving to see how the Word of God is presented to the Christians who are expected to make this Word the code of conduct for their life and the norm for their existence. This week, this ceremony will take place in Corazón de María and María Auxiliadora. I congratulate all those who are participating and I pray that you will continue to create these catechumenal communities in all the parishes of the Archdiocese. I pray also that those persons who have been baptized and want to remain faithful and consistent in the living of their baptismal commitment will form part of these communities. In these communities, people are able to learn about the great mission of the Christian in the world.

During this past week two individuals from El Salvador have participated in international assemblies. At the United Nations, the Chancellor from El Salvador referred to the situation of human rights and stated that these rights are respected in El Salvador. Therefore, the vigilance of other nations with regard to this matter is simply a way for them to interfere in the internal affairs of our country. My dear sisters and brothers, I want to state clearly that this political perspective is quite distinct from the Church's perspective. As Catholics, and as Church, we want to say that we do not share this political point of view. We are also surprised that, for political reasons, the United States does not say anything about this situation of human rights. They do not support us in these political forums.

We want to say now, and let it be very clear to every Catholic, that the respect and the defense of freedom and the dignity and the rights of the human person is viewed by the Church as a mission that rises above partisan politics. As one sent by God, as a prophet to the world, it is the Church's right to defend the image of God in every person. Therefore, we put aside the assessments of presidents, cabinet ministers and politicians and we exhort people to inscribe in their hearts the love of God and the gospel vision. My sisters and brothers --- and I say this for many reasons --- we have never taken advantage of our religious situation for political reasons. Quite the contrary, for political reasons, our government does not take advantage of the religious situation to resolve the problems that we confront. The religious dimensions are on a higher level than the political dimensions. Our criteria are very strong and high. Therefore, when the Church defends these causes, she is clearly defending what God wants her to defend.

I also want to clarify here a concern of many people, namely, the intervention that Bishop Revelo, the delegate of our Episcopal Conference, made at the Synod of Bishops.<sup>1</sup> The newspaper, *El Mundo*, highlights what is convenient for them and what places the Church in a bad light.

I invite you to wait for the personal clarification of Bishop Revelo and not judge him without first giving him a hearing. But there is one thing we can say here. As the leader of this Archdiocese, I want to say to the beloved priests and to all the faithful, especially to the catechists who collaborate in our mission in so many different towns and villages --- I want to state that every priest and catechist who is laboring for the establishment of the Kingdom of God and is in communion with the Archbishop, has the full support of the Archbishop. Despite the defamation campaign, there is no reason to doubt the priests' and the catechists' orthodoxy and fidelity to the Church. We are not so naïve as to believe that our priests are not communists.

These statements about our priests were most difficult for Bishop Chavez to bear --- they were and continue to be slanderous and ridiculous. Even though I am exposed to the same slander and ridicule, I want to exhort our beloved priests to remain faithful to the Church's teaching. Maintain your unity with your bishop and do not be afraid of the misinterpretations that might be given to your mission, for your mission is in accord with the teaching of Vatican II and the Medellin Conference. We are tired of being called communists when we defend those rights that the Council and Medellin call the true ministry of the Church's pastors.

The Vatican Radio expressed its surprise at the statements of Bishop Revelo<sup>2</sup> and stated that they found it strange that a bishop of El Salvador was unaware of the heroism and the authenticity of the ministry of the catechists in the rural areas. This is a difficult ministry and it is there, in the rural areas, where we have gathered up the dead bodies of the victims of this violence, including the bodies of our priests. This has occurred precisely because of their work in the area of catechetics. Indeed, the ministry of our catechists is most admirable. I congratulate all of them. I want to take advantage of this opportunity to also express my support to those catechists who minister in the towns and villages and exhort you to not allow yourselves to be overcome by fear. I want you to be aware of the fact that as you study the Word of God and create a critical Christian conscience in other people, you are forming other men and women and helping them to mature in their faith. With these criteria and this maturity of faith, people no longer accept everything that is told to them. In light of the gospel, they are able to discern what is just and unjust and thus make demands for a better world. If it is necessary to die for this cause, then it will be a martyr's death because you will die defending the faith. Do not allow yourselves to be overcome by fear! If it is necessary, as certain communities have stated, live your faith in the catacombs, like your ancestors. This is not a form of clandestine activity but rather it is the Church of silence that continues to live according to her conscience and has no fear. Again I repeat, do not allow yourselves to be overcome by fear and do not succumb to the political and economic perquisites of the moment. As Saint Paul Says, *be faithful to Christ* .

This week we have also seen demonstrations by the Masons and I want to remind our Catholic population about the law of the Church that states: *those who join a Masonic sect or other societies of the same sort, which plot against the Church or against legitimate civil authority incur ipso facto an excommunication reserved to the Holy See*<sup>3</sup> . Be aware of the fact that those Masons and those persons who have joined this sect are excommunicated.

Hopefully, the euphoria of these triumphal moments of the Masons will not deceive the Catholic population. Maintain yourselves faithful to the Church, for if you become a member of this sect, the Church will no longer recognize you as her child.

My sisters and brothers, we are still saddened by the “disappearance” of Mrs. Chiurato and there are no signs that this situation will soon be clarified. We have had many communications concerning this matter but no one has identified themselves. Speaking for the family of Mrs. Chiurato, I wish to communicate with those who have abducted this woman and ask you to identify yourselves so that we can be sure that you have her. Her family is very willing to negotiate this matter. Too much time has already passed and we desire to see a state of calmness restored to this family. The family is willing to negotiate if you truly have this woman, but they need to be assured that this is not some kind of trick.

Finally, I want to thank and also recommend that everyone read the article that was published in the magazine of the Central American University (UCA).<sup>4</sup> This article speaks about the attitude of the archbishop and states that he does not want to enter into conflict with anyone but wants to fulfill his obligations, obligations that he sincerely tries to live out. He desires to be understood by everyone. We give no credence to the slanderous campaign that continues to move forward day after day (I have received many anonymous and vulgar letters) but I want all of you to know that my position is rooted in my conscience. My position has not been influenced by pressure but is simply the right of a pastor who feels the joy of living with his people --- and at the same time, the anguish. Because of this unity with the people, and because of our fidelity to the will of God, we walk together on paths that are the paths of the Lord. Remain faithful, my sisters and brothers! Remain united! For this will provide us not with some fleeting victory of this world (in fact, we do not pretend to look for this kind of victory), but with the triumph of the Kingdom of God.

Therefore, in this context, as we live the realities that occur week after week, as we confront misunderstandings and all these cruel realities that exist in our situation, we need to have criteria to judge all these matters. For without criteria, we simply live according to the circumstances of life and give no shape to history. Therefore, I want to preach to you, not because I want to be heard on radio as some anonymous writer has said. Nor do I want to bore people. Those who are bored by listening to me have an easy solution --- turn off your radio or do not come to the cathedral. But I feel an obligation to preach what has to be preached. For example, today, I do not use my own criteria as a starting point, but rather base my words on the Word of God. I would entitle today’s homily: the Church of integral development. The Pope says that economic development is not enough. The development that the Church provides must take into consideration the whole person. Thus the famous expression of Pope Paul VI, *the development of the whole person and the development of all people* (a). Therefore I entitle today’s homily: the Church of integral development, the development of the whole person and the development of all people. In this way I am able to provide a unity to the beautiful readings that we have listened to today.

### **The development of the whole person**

The first reading and the gospel situate us in the sad world of illness and one of its most painful expressions, the leper. In face of leprosy, an illness that is one of the consequences of sin, the prophet Elisha and Jesus adopt an attitude of liberation. If illness is a sad consequence of sin, then people have to be freed from sin and its consequences. This is the Church’s norm regarding human development. The bishops in Medellin stated: *the*

*masses who live in misery is a sin, an injustice that cries out to heaven* (b). Marginality, hunger, illiteracy, malnutrition and so many other terrible realities that enter into all the pores of the human person are consequences of sin --- consequences of the sin of those who accumulate material goods without any regard for others. These are also the consequences of the sin of those who have nothing and are unwilling to struggle for their personal development. They are conformists and lazy and unwilling to struggle for their personal development.

But many times, they are not at fault for this unwillingness to struggle. Because of a series of conditions and structures, they are not allowed to progress. Thus there is a whole group of what we might call mutual sin. Medellín calls this the sin of *institutionalized injustice* (c) --- an injustice that becomes part of our environment. As a result of this we have the situation that is placed before us in today's readings. Naaman, in the first reading, comes and seeks redemption from the prophet of God and in the gospel we see the anguish of the ten lepers who cry out to Jesus: *Master! Have pity on us!* (d).

In these ill persons we can see the languishing multitude that today, from their situation of marginality, cries out to their pastors for liberation, as the Medellín Documents call it: *a liberation that reaches them from nowhere else* (e). The Church, faithful to Jesus Christ, would be cruel, if like the priests in the gospel, turned their backs and walked by without caring for the poor wounded man on the road (f). Jesus and the prophet Elisha confront this situation directly. Leprosy had inspired some terrible laws among the People of God. Read the Book of Leviticus: if one is found to bear the sores of leprosy, that individual must leave the community and live outside the city. Each time that a person draws near, he must cry out *Unclean! Unclean!* (g). From the roadside, the voice of the poor lepers seemed like a cry from the tomb. All who drew near were called to beware --- turn back --- Unclean! Dirty! Do not come near us! We will contaminate you! Anguish obliged the lepers to come together as a community in pain. The human person has a right to organize, even if they are lepers, *campesinos*, workers. People have a need to rise up from a position of prostration and find support in others. Why would one condemn such an organization? Jesus approached the organization of the lepers. It is true that one of them was a Samaritan and the relationship between the Samaritans and Jesus was one of "enemies". This could be compared, perhaps not in an exact way, to the people of Honduras and El Salvador who are politically distinct, but in their pain, have a need to come together. In pain, boundaries disappear and one feels only pain. The Samaritan in the gospel did not see himself as evil or bad. Quite the contrary, he saw himself as a brother to his political enemies, the Jews, and with them, goes out to meet the Lord.

Naaman was a foreigner, and through the news of a young woman, a slave girl in his household (a Jewish home), he is told: *if only my master would present himself to the prophet in Samaria, he would cure him of his leprosy* (h). And so Naaman, with great pride in his position in society, finally heeds the voice of the young woman. And thus occurs the events that we heard about in the first reading. When he arrives at the house of the prophet Elisha, he is told: *Go and wash seven times in the Jordan* (i). The immediate reaction of Naaman is one of arrogance: *I have traveled such a long distance for this? Are there not better rivers in my own land? And now this prophet simply asks me to do one thing and he will not even accompany me* (j). But Naaman's servant said: *If the prophet had told you to do something extraordinary, would you not have done it? All the more now, since he said to wash seven times in the river. Obey him!* (k). So Naaman obeyed. When he came out of the river, he was cleansed of his leprosy. He then turns to the prophet Elisha and speaks to him these

words of faith: *Now I know that there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel. Please accept a gift from your servant* (l). Elisha did not want to receive anything.

Elisha is a very interesting figure. He has a role in the Book of Kings. At that time there did not exist the prophets who would be the protagonists of the history of Israel. The kings, especially Solomon and David, were the central figures and gave the Kingdom of Israel a political constitution. But these kings were always accompanied by others, confessors and preachers, very much like the preachers who stood beside the Catholic kings. One of these men was Elisha, a type of confessor to the king. The breath of the divine word was infused into the politics of the king through the prophets. The government officials who adhered to the word of the prophets were blessed, while those who despised their words were cursed. The Book of Kings is filled with examples of this. Elisha was one of those prophets who divided his time between the Royal Court where he counseled King Jeroboam and a community life which he shared with his brother prophets. In these communities the prophets prayed, meditated and listened to the word of God in order to be able to communicate this word to the world. Elisha realized that in his meditation and in his participation at the Royal Court, he was simply God's instrument. He had such a humble concept of himself that when Naaman wanted to offer him a large sum of money as a recompense for having been cleansed by the prophet, Elisha did not want to receive anything. He said: *as the Lord lives whom I serve, I shall not take it* (m). What a beautiful gesture! My sisters and brothers, at times the Church has been very defective and committed grave sins because she has converted her role as God's instrument into a business and this is reprehensible. Also the priest who uses his priestly power to obtain money is abusing that power. In this cathedral, where injustice and disorder are denounced, we are most willing to be criticized when we do not act correctly. Like Elisha, the priest must feel that everything comes from God. The Word that I am sharing with you today is from God. If people praise me and applaud me for the words that I speak, and I believe that these applauses are for me, then I am robbing God. My sisters and brothers, I offer your acceptance and appreciation of my words to God, for these words are not my words, but God's. If we, as ministers and human persons, need money in order to eat and clothe ourselves and provide for the offices and the churches where we attend to your needs, then this is a different case. If, however, one were to use his priestly ministry in a selfish way and accumulate wealth, then that person is committing a sacrilege. The Bible says: *what you have received as gift, give to others as a gift* (n). People know how to respond to our calls, and I say this because I have experienced your generosity as you help us in our works and in our personal needs. We have nothing to complain about. Like Saint Paul we say that as long as we are able to eat and clothe ourselves and have a place to live, then we have no complaint.

The prophet Elisha then listens to the humble confession of the Syrian, Naaman who says: *let me, your servant, have two mule-loads of earth, for I will no longer offer holocaust or sacrifice to any other god except to the Lord* (o). Thus we stand before a person who has been converted, a pagan who did not know about the God of Israel. But because of the attitude of the prophet, he came to know this God and worship the true God. My sisters and brothers, this is one of my greatest satisfactions at this time. So many hearts have been converted, and not just the hearts of those who are humble. I listen to confessions that fill me with great satisfaction. I listen to people with money say: *yes, you are right. If there are people who do not want to understand this, it is because they are selfish. We are willing to do whatever we can.* My sisters and brothers, I have great hope, that the Church, who has offered herself to enter into sincere dialogue without betraying the truth of the gospel, will

find echo not only in the hearts of poor people but also among those people who are powerful and wealthy. Those who listen to the truth are very blind if they do not follow it.

In this world of illness and conversion we find the ten lepers of the gospel. What a sad figure! Today, I would like to reflect with you on this encounter with human suffering. My sisters and brothers, let our hearts now be focused on this human disgrace and let us turn our eyes to our hospitals. I live in a hospital and at times feel very close to this suffering. During the night, I can hear the moans of people in pain and I see the sadness of family members who have to hospitalize a loved one. Think of the long lines of sick people who wait at our hospitals and are looking for a restoration of their health which ultimately they do not find. Think of the sick family member who is perhaps listening to me now by radio. Hopefully this word will bring them some consolation. My sisters and brothers who are ill, we are thinking of you.

In one of his recent teachings<sup>5</sup>, the Pope spoke about organization of society and said that it did not matter that civil society could replace the Church in certain works on behalf of humankind. The Church will always have a very special spirit when dealing with suffering, a spirit that cannot be provided by all the technical expertise of doctors or nurses or well-equipped hospitals. Many times these center and modern technology reduce the sick person to a number, another case to be solved, an object. They forget that the sick person is first and foremost a human person, who needs love, charity, and tenderness. It is not enough that a nurse is skilled in giving injections or a transfusion and then treats the sick person in a disrespectful manner. This time of compassion for the sick person calls the doctors and nurses and all the personnel in the hospital to humanize their mission. They are called to understand that they are not treating an animal or an object but rather they are dealing with human persons who at the time of being hospitalized are separated from their family. They feel the pain of being separated from the loving hands of other family members who make them feel well in their homes. This is the environment in which sick people find themselves.

They must also understand that their suffering is not useless even though we might treat them as people who are useless. My sisters and brothers, when we view sick people as useless we are approaching the theory of Hitler and the German system of eliminating those individuals who are useless. An old person or a sick person who is no longer useful is then eliminated. How inhuman! We can arrive at this situation especially when we no longer take care of life at its beginning stages. Here I refer to the beginning of life in the womb of a mother, a life that many times is eliminated through abortion. This is an act of assassination. What is worse in this case is that a mother assassinates her own child. It is then very easy to move from this act of abortion to an act that would take the life of an individual who has been conceived --- an elderly person, a sick person, anyone who is seen as useless. If obstacles are placed in the way of a fetus (a human life in the mother's womb) then it also becomes easy to eliminate the life of an elderly person especially when there is no love in the home. It becomes a very logical step. If abortion is logical then the process of the elimination of other people is also logical.

It is therefore necessary to humanize our relationships with those who suffer and with those persons who might appear to be useless. Jesus left us a great mystery: On the day of judgment we will be asked about the way that we dealt with those who suffer because *whatever you did for one of these least brothers [or sisters] of mine, you did for me* (p). For this reason I said at the beginning of this celebration that the political, health and technical

considerations of society are not a priority for Christians. They know that in relating with those who are ill or poor or in misery, they are, in reality, relating with Christ.

From this perspective of the world of sick people, I want to draw the following conclusion. Pope Paul VI said that it is necessary *to develop the whole person* (q). Thus when Jesus is concerned about the physical health of the sick person, he shows that the concern for the salvation of souls is not enough. At the present time there is a dangerous spirituality that is a reaction against the new language of the Church that speaks of liberation and human rights and protests the abuses by political power and the lack of respect for the human person. There is a reaction against this loyal attitude of the Church that says that the Church should just speak about spirituality and God and the Kingdom of Heaven and should not be concerned about earthly matters. These people are unaware of the fact that they are not being faithful to the gospel. For even though Jesus came to save souls he also came to provide for their corporeal needs. As Elisha cured Naaman, so Jesus, using the ministry of the priests, cured the ten lepers: *Go and show yourselves to the priests* (r). Read in the book of Leviticus the beautiful ceremony that reincorporates a leper who has been cleansed (s). There is a rite of consecration that incorporates the cleansed person into the People of God. Jesus respects the ecclesiastical laws of his time, just as we should also respect the present ecclesiastical laws. If today's priests were to fall into the same situation as the priests in the time of Jesus, then Jesus is providing them with an example of how the law should be respected: *Go and show yourselves to the priests* (t). As the lepers obeyed Jesus' command, they were cleansed. Surely they continued to travel to see the priests so that they might once again be incorporated into the People of God through the imposition of the hands of the priest.

Yet the Samaritan, a political enemy of Jesus' people, returns to Jesus, the Jew who is also God. He kneels before Jesus, bows his head to the earth, sings the glory of God and gives thanks because he has been cleansed. We see here the example of a man who feels that the human development that the Church provides is not simply the forgiveness of sins but restoration of health to the body. Just recently the Holy See has published a document that I will make known to you in our newspaper *Orientación*. It speaks about the fact that today the Church cannot separate human development from the bodily welfare of the human person, from the reality of human rights --- for all these matters are part of the Church's evangelization mission. There should be no dichotomy between the rights of God and the rights of the human person. Therefore, when one speaks of the rights of God, one is also referring to the rights of the human person and vice versa. When we speak about human rights, we are affirming the fact that the human person is created in the image of God and thus we are defending God.

Therefore I repeat that the perspective of the Church is a religious perspective, a perspective that is focused on God and not on some political reality. This is implied in the phrase of Paul VI when he speaks of *the development of the whole person*, the development of soul and body, heart and mind and social relations. Let us feel this equality that God has given to all his children and let us organize our world in a way that conforms to this integral development of the whole person. May the whole person be aware of its ability to develop all its talents and gifts, to be cured and cleansed, to find hospitals that will provide health care, to find schools where all children can be educated so that illiteracy is no longer a reality in our society. Therefore, in every sense of the word, may we provide for the integral development of the whole person.

## The development of all people

In the second place, the Pope also speaks of *the development of all people* (u). Since this is the month that is dedicated to the missions, I want to focus on the fact that the leper that was cured by Elisha was a foreigner. Jesus notes this fact when he says: *There were many lepers in Israel during the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian* (v). Naaman was a Syrian, a pagan, one who lived beyond the frontiers of Israel and at that time, if one were not a Jew, then one was considered to be a dog, a foreigner. Thus a dog and a foreigner, inspired by God, visits the prophet and becomes aware that God is the father of all people. God has not invited a select group of people to sit at the table with him, while others gather crumbs that fall from the table, but rather all people are invited to participate in the great banquet of life that God hosts. This is the meaning of the development of all people and is also the meaning of the missionary work of the Church. *Populorum Progressio* states that from the beginning of time the Church has been concerned about the development of all people (w) and is not interested in acquiring temporal power (x). Let this be very clear to politicians.

The Church has no desire to acquire temporal power but wants to establish the Kingdom of God in the midst of the world. This Kingdom of God will create a more just situation for the exercise of political power and will make this political power more understandable to the people when they see that it is enlightened with a sense of justice and true development and when they see that their participation in the political process is a right that is respected. It is for this reason that the Church preaches about their participation in society as children of God. Indeed, each person has a right to participate in this process because everyone has been given different talents that ultimately provide for the welfare of the whole nation. Everyone has a right to participate in the formulation of the common good of the nation.

The Church promotes this development everywhere. While some will say that this is subversion, the Church knows that this is not true. For the Church is concerned about the development of all peoples, while respecting the differences that exist among nations. The encyclical also states, however, that *the missionaries sometimes intermingled the thought patterns and behavior patterns of their native land with the authentic message of Christ* (y). At this time, the Church is attempting to correct this attitude and is aware that this was a mistake on her part. The Church attempts to identify herself with the people who are being evangelized and is not so much concerned about the interests of the nation as she is about their art and science and race and way of being, for the Church wants to develop all of these areas and divinize all of this.

We are doing this here in El Salvador. We are not a foreign power but we are the soul of the people and the life of the nation. Thus the Church preaches, and feels that she has a right to preach, a gospel that does not bring into the nation some foreign power but rather injects life into our own life and makes the people of El Salvador more Salvadorean who love their homeland and work for the development their country. This is the work of the Church in the midst of the people and for this reason some people do not want to understand this mission, even though we have been most clear about this matter.

## Development of the Spirit

Finally, my sisters and brothers, I want to speak about a third point and with this I will conclude. This development of the whole person and development of all people is carried out not only to heal the body of Naaman, the Syrian or to make the ten lepers happy because they have been cleansed from their illness. The most important dimension about all of this physical development is that Jesus has also brought about a development of the spirit. Look at how both miracles conclude. In the case of Naaman, we heard the beautiful words: *let me have two mule-loads of earth, for I will no longer offer holocaust or sacrifice to any other god except to the Lord (z)*. This is the goal of development: to unite men and women with God. Look also at how the cure (development) of the leper concludes: he returns, gives glory to God, cries out in a loud voice, kneels before Jesus and thanks him.(a2) Again the goal of the Church's development: that men and women will bend their knees before Christ.

During this time of trial in the history of the nation and the family, Saint Paul writes to Timothy. Paul is a prisoner, in chains, but he tells us this morning that *the Word of God is not chained (b2)*. What freedom is produced by this Christian faith! A Church that is persecuted, tortured and experiences assassinations is able, like Saint Paul, to say: *the Word of God is not chained*. The fact is that when they wanted to silence the voice of Father Grande and instill fear in our priests so that they would no longer speak, they simply awakened the prophetic meaning of our Church. The Church threw off her chains because she realized that it was impossible to kill the word that is on her lips. For this word continues to vibrate through the ministry of a Church that bears the promise that Christ will be with her until the end of time. What is the word that the preacher must proclaim? What is this word that is not chained? Saint Paul tells us that this word is summed up in fidelity to God. This is the certain doctrine of the Church: Jesus is born and is a descendent of David. As a man, he belongs to the royal class. But this is not the most important fact. What is more important, however, is that this Jesus has risen from the dead.

My sisters and brothers, what fear could people possibly experience if they believe in the One who will raise them up to eternal life when they die? People are fearful because many have lost faith in the resurrection. But this hope has been reawakened in many who are willing to die with Christ in order that they might live with him forever. Thus, Saint Paul says: *If we have died with him, we shall also live with him; if we persevere, we shall reign with him (c2)*. Notice Jesus' words: *Whoever denies me before others, I will also deny before my heavenly Father*. Christ's denial will be most terrible when the definitive time is at hand. Some will say: *Lord, we had fear of you and so we became Masons, we became members of ORDEN<sup>6</sup> (National Democratic Organization), we entered into the political arena*. Jesus will respond: *Since you denied me, here is your sentence. If you deny me, I will also deny you before my heavenly Father*. But notice the difference in the following passage: *If you are unfaithful, God remains faithful (d2)*. What a great consolation! Even though we might betray Jesus, yet if we look for him once again, we will find Jesus waiting, with open arms to receive us. All is forgotten. Look at the encounter of Jesus with Peter on the morning of the resurrection. In face of Peter's cowardly denial of Jesus on Holy Thursday, Jesus simply asks him: *do you love me (e2)*. Peter embarrassed and repentant responds: *Yes Lord, you know that I love you. What occurred the other night was weakness and I deserve to be punished*. Jesus does not condemn Peter for his sin, but remains faithful. Therefore, every sinner and all those who have separated themselves from Christ should be aware of the following: *If you are unfaithful, Jesus will remain faithful*. My sisters and brothers, what a great consolation for me, a sinner and for everyone else who is a sinner! For with all our weaknesses and

defects, we can still encounter Jesus. Jesus forgives us, loves us --- all is forgotten --- *for he cannot deny himself* (f2). A truly profound reason --- to do otherwise would be to deny the fact that he is God and Redeemer.

Therefore, my sisters and brothers, and we conclude our humble explanation about the Church and integral development, the Church is concerned about the salvation of souls but is also concerned about the salvation of the whole human person and the defense of the historical rights of the individual. This mission of the Church is not fulfilled simply by world politics but presents the relationship of men and women with God as the first absolute. The Church seeks the conversion of every heart and therefore it would be worthless if all the poor had their own houses and their own money but were all sinners with their hearts estranged from God. What good would it be? At the present time there are nations that are economically and socially quite advanced, for example, those of northern Europe, and yet how much vice and excess! The Church will always have a word to say about this situation: conversion. Human development will not be complete even if we organize the economy and the political and social order of our people in an ideal way. It will not be complete with that. That, however, will provide a basis so that it can be completed by what the Church proclaims and pursues: God adored by all, Christ acknowledged as the only Saviour, and a deep joy of spirit in being at peace with God and with our sisters and brothers.

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<sup>1</sup> Describing the catechetical situation in El Salvador, Monsignor Revelo said, in his intervention in the Synod, that rural catechists “were rapidly falling into the nets of the Communist Party and the extreme leftist groups of Marxist tendencies and would soon join their ranks.... And no less a problem, certainly the most serious, is the group of priests convinced that the only possible solution to the oppression that the great majority of our people suffer is cooperation with Marxism”. See James R. Brockman, *Romero, a Life*, Orbis Books, pp. 92-93.

<sup>2</sup> Vatican Radio commented: “The words of Bishop Revelo are somewhat disconcerting, since they seem to contradict or not recognise the genuine, valiant, and even heroic apostolate that many priests and catechists are carrying out in El Salvador in the countryside, an apostolate that certainly does not seem so easy when there are threats of death, expulsions, and even martyrdom, like that of Father Rutilio Grande.” See James R. Brockman, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

<sup>3</sup> *Code of Canon Law*, 2335. Archbishop Romero quotes from the Code of 1917, valid until the promulgation of the new one in 1983.

<sup>4</sup> See “La palabra profética de la arquidiócesis”, *ECA* 346 (1977), pp. 605-608.

<sup>5</sup> See Paul VI, General Audience of 21 September 1977, *Osservatore Romano*, 25 September 1977.

<sup>6</sup> National Democratic Organisation (ORDEN), created by the Armed Forces of El Salvador in 1967 which, under the direction on general José Alberto Medrano, became a weapon of control and repression of country people.

*Margin References* (a) PP 14: (b) M 1,1: (c) M 2,16: (d) Lk 17,13: (e) M 14,2: (f) Lk 10,29-37: (g) Lk 13, 45-46: (h) 2 K 5,3: (i) 2 K 5,10: (j) 2 K 5,11-12: (k) 2 K 5,13: (l) 2K 5,15: (m) 2K 5,16: (n) Mt 10,8: (o) 2 K 5,17: (p) Mt 25,40: (q) PP 14: (r) Lk 17,14: (s) Lv 14,1-32: (t) Lk 17,14: (u) PP 14: (v) Lk 4,27: (w) PP 12: (x) PP 13: (y) PP 12: (z) 2 K 5,15-17: (a2) Lk 17,15: (b2) 2Tm 2,9: (c2) 2Tm 2,11-12: (d2) 2Tm 2,13a: (e2) Jn 21,15: (f2) 2Tm 2,13b.