

THE CHURCH OF HOPE

First Sunday of Advent
November 27, 1977

Isaiah 2:1-5
Romans 13:11-14
Matthew 24:37-44

.....in the second reading¹, the Apostle invites us to become aware of the times in which we are living. What a beautiful exhortation for this allows me to tell you, my sisters and brothers, that today the Church marks the beginning of a new Liturgical Year. This is the first Sunday of Advent and the priest is clothed in purple vestments, a sign of the called to penance in preparation for the coming of the Lord. In the East, purple is also a sign of wealth, thus, the richness of God's grace that is offered at this time to those who await the coming of the Lord and who await this coming as people who are hungry.

This is a Sunday of hope, a time in which we begin our preparation for Christmas. Thus the Liturgical Year is a spiritual pilgrimage that begins today and as we move through Christmas and the Epiphany we are presented with the great truth of a God who became man in order to save us. Throughout the whole year we hear the proclamation of the teachings of his gospel and message. The Church pauses and reflects on all these mysteries as she enters into the Lenten preparations and the death of Jesus on the cross on Good Friday, as she enters into the resurrection of Christ and the fifty days of the Easter season when she sings *Alleluia* in order to engrave in the mind of all Christians the fact that Christ lives. Fifty days after Easter we celebrate Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit that Christ promised, the Spirit that Jesus bought with his divine blood, the Spirit that is poured out on the Church as she begins her pilgrimage. Twenty centuries of history.

Year after year the Church returns to this source. As the Church presents the unfolding of the redemptive mysteries of Christ during the course of the Liturgical Year, she is not simply calling to mind events of the past. My sisters and brothers, I want to be very clear in this idea. The liturgical celebration is not the remembrance of some past event like when we celebrate the 15th of September. That very day, September 15, 1821 is a day in the past but the liturgy is presence. The Second Vatican Council states: *Within the cycle of a year, moreover, she unfolds the whole mystery of Christ, from the incarnation and birth until the ascension, the day of Pentecost, and the expectation of blessed hope and of the coming of the Lord. Recalling thus the mysteries of redemption, the Church opens to the faithful the riches of her Lord's powers and merits, so that these are in some way made present for all time, and the faithful are enabled to lay hold upon them and become filled with saving grace* (a). This is like the Israelites who celebrated Passover, their deliverance from Egypt, (b) even though years and centuries had passed, yet when their families gathered together they said: *This night we are leaving Egypt*. They are referring to the present time and this is liturgy, this is the meaning of the liturgy of the Church --- it makes present today, November 27, 1977, it makes present the expectation of the Old Testament, the expectation of the Christ who comes to fulfill his promises.

We are now present before this mystery so that every Christian of good will can enter this Sunday into personal contact with the Christ who came twenty centuries ago but who continues to come through the mystery of the Church's liturgy. Thus the Mass of each Sunday and the liturgical feasts of the year, the feast of our Cathedral which is celebrated on August 6th --- all of these are the presence of the mystery of Christ.

How wonderful it would be if we came to our churches with this sense of news that I communicate to you at the beginning of my homilies. I do this not to satisfy the curiosity of people but to tell you that at this time, this Sunday, at this liturgical celebration, Christ is present in our Cathedral and in the chapels where people have gathered together to join in an intimate reflection with us --- Christ is present and illuminates the realities of El Salvador, the realities of our families and the intimate realities of each one of us. We cannot separate God's word from the historical reality in which it is proclaimed. It would not then be God's word. It would be history; it would be a pious book, a Bible that is just a book in our library. It becomes God's word because it vivifies, enlightens, contrasts, repudiates, praises what is going on today in this society. For example: each one of you has a thousand more things that could be listed here and it is good that you illuminate these realities with the Word that has been proclaimed today.

Recent news

We want to express our greeting of hospitality to all the young men and women, sports people of Central America, who have gathered here for the Second Central American Olympic Games. Hopefully during these uncertain hours we might hear the voices of these young people who call us to unity and peace. Sports is a message and I am grateful for this time when the proclamation of God's message can be communicated through the sporting event that is being played out in our city and in our Republic. Welcome, young men and women from Central America and may El Salvador honor its tradition of hospitality.

During recent days, the publication of the Law of Public Order has received numerous commentaries from many people ². I am not an expert in Law and I am not a lawyer but I invite the lawyers to honor their legal knowledge and express their judgment about this law. As Pastor I want to illuminate the law with the classical theological doctrine concerning law. I am not meddling in the technical aspects of the law even though I have heard some lawyers speak about the legal errors and sins of this recent law. Again in this aspect the lawyers must honor their profession and determine whether or not we have been given a true law. From the perspective of theology and as a priest and one who is called to illuminate these realities with the Word of God I have the right and the obligation to enlighten this event of our nation. I am going to refer to a passage in Saint Thomas Aquinas, in the text of his *Summa Theologica*. Law is defined as follows: *Law is an ordinance of reason for the common good, made by him who has care of the community, and promulgated*³, Briefly we find here the four elements of a true law.

Law is *an ordinance of reason, ordinatio rationis*, which means that law is not the result of arbitrariness or whim. The pagans distinguished this rational element of law from the capriciousness of the dictator who speaks the famous phrase: *sic volo, sic juveo, sic pro ratione voluntas*, that is, *I will it, I order it, therefore let my will stand for reason*. This is not rational. The human person is guided by reason and not by arbitrariness or whim. Therefore the first characteristic of law is that it must be rational and ordered by reason.

Secondly, the law *must be directed to the common good*. Law is not meant to benefit a government official or a privileged group who has recourse to the law in order to oppress or repress others, but rather the common good must be sought. Thus, all people, rich and poor, can see that the law has made provision for their happiness, welfare, freedom and dignity.

Thirdly, law *must be made by him who has care of the community*. In other words the one who makes law ought to feel that he/she is mandated to do so by the community since the whole community is unable to make laws but rather nominate a representative, a legislative assembly, legislators, and governors who must echo the community. Only when lawmakers echo the community does law have power.

Lastly, the law *must be promulgated*. The law is a means and this means is only effective when it is applied to the object that is measured. Therefore, if the law is for the common good, it has to be promulgated and given to the community so that they know it and analyze it and accept it. Only then is it law. Only then can it be said that a law made by men is a reflection of the natural law and natural law is the source of all law. So, in another article Saint Augustine says: *a law that is not just should not be called a law.*⁴ *The binding force of the law depends on its justice and dealing with human matters its justice is in proportion to its conformity to the norms of reason. Thus, the first norm of reason is natural law and as a consequence all human law will have the character of law to the degree that it is derived from natural law. If it departs from natural law, it would not be law but a corruption of the law.*⁵

The natural law, the law that is written in our hearts, provides us with many rights, for example, the right to free assembly, the right to freedom, the right to defend ourselves at a trial, the right not to be tortured in order to seek “the truth”. If all these natural laws are trampled upon by a pseudo-law, then Saint Thomas clearly says: *This is not a law but a corruption of the law.*

Saint Thomas analyzes the four functions of law.⁶ He says that law regulates the human acts of a society by 1) prescribing virtuous acts, 2) prohibiting sinful acts, 3) allowing indifferent acts, 4) punishing in order to induce one to obey just laws. We agree that law should lead one to virtue and prohibit the unjust actions of everyone. We have said many times that there exists in Latin America an injustice that has become institutionalized. (c) If a law does not take into consideration this injustice that must be ordered rightly, then such a law would be unjust. Law should not echo the voices of those classes or groups of people who are instituting oppression, but should echo the voices of those who are being oppressed and repressed. Only when the law rewards and punishes all classes of people equally, only then is a law just.

In our publication *Orientación*⁷, in the column *Words of the Archbishop* you can read the words of the Pope and the bishops who were gathered together in Rome for the Synod of Bishops. They denounced the abuse of certain governments who do not give freedom to the Church to proclaim her integral message. The Church can be silenced by force. But God does not want these microphones that are doing so much good --- God does not want these microphones eliminated. If, however, one day these microphones should be taken away from the voice of the Church, there is something that cannot be silenced and that is the conscience of a people that is like a microphone of God that obliges us to proclaim the message of Christ and to promote men and women to become true children of God. We must proclaim this

message everywhere even if there are no radio stations that transmit our voice. If one day we were unable to communicate with one another, especially with those people in distant areas of our diocese, if we were unable to communicate as we are doing now my sisters and brothers, it would not be important. For now I call upon every Catholic to try to be a faithful echo of this message by the way that you live and act and speak. When we were in Apopa to celebrate the feast of their patroness, Saint Catherine of Alexandria, we spoke about the meaning of a martyr and said that a martyr is a witness. Every Catholic has to be a martyr, a witness to the message that God wants to be proclaimed before the world.

The Word of God illuminates another aspect of the news and gives us hope. The mothers of those persons who have been arrested and who have disappeared have formed an association.⁸ I spoke to you before about the way in which the ten lepers gathered together in their suffering (d), so too these mothers who suffer an incredible anguish have the right to come together to comfort one another, to help one another, and to ask: what have they done with our children? I greet these women and am also saddened that the press has refused to publish this news. Why is our press so fearful? On Thursday, December 1st, the feast of Divine Providence, this association of mothers is going to celebrate here in the Cathedral at noon a votive Mass for their children and for the consolation of these mothers. I am very pleased to celebrate this Mass and to join in solidarity once again with this just association of women who are suffering so greatly.

I also have other denunciations. We are greatly surprised by the capture of César Valle who was working in the name of Vivienda Mínima and bringing 26 families from Colima which was flooded and therefore demanded the urgent relocation of these families in other houses. Vivienda Mínima has offered them lodging in Colonia de Usulután and César Valle was working on this matter. The police captured him and as of last night we have no other information except that he was being held by the police. Hopefully they understand that he was working for the good of people and there is no reason to hinder this work. I also want to make the following denunciation that was communicated to me by a professor from San Miguel. Iris Idalia Portilla de Arévalo found her son in the Hospital Rosales and saw that he had been tortured. We also lament the fact that her husband, Efraín Arévalo, has disappeared.

My sisters and brothers, as the Church passes through this season of Advent, she wants to fill us with hope. On the other hand, my sisters and brothers, I desire that each day we might experience a great satisfaction in being Church and that despite the difficulties of our situation, the Church might become more united and more understanding of her own greatness and dignity.

For example, during this past week the Church has received many consolations. I was invited to observe and participate in the Seventh Latin American Congress of Workers that was celebrated in Costa Rica from November 21-26. I was deeply moved by the ovation that the Church of El Salvador received from those workers from every part of Latin America. One of them said: *If the Church had been the authentic Church of the gospel, a Church that had no fear of the power of this earth, we would not have to lament the alienation of the working class from the Church nor would we have to lament the existence of atheism.* It is sad, my sisters and brothers, to think that we are culpable here because we have desired to support our Church with the powers of this earth and when we do this, we lose everything. We must seek our support in the omnipotent power of Christ, knowing that by ourselves we are weak.

I received here a visit from the Bishop of Cleveland, Bishop Heaky who is visiting his priests. Priests from the Diocese of Cleveland are ministering in the parish of La Libertad and in San Miguel in the Parish of Chirilagua and La Union. I thanked the bishop in the name of the Archdiocese for this wonderful collaboration of the North American priests. I was also visited by two prominent North American Jesuits, Father Carter and Father Simon Smith who offered words of praise and encouragement to the position that our Church has taken.

Yesterday I had the honor of greeting the Superior General of the Passionists, Father Paul Boyle. He went to visit the great work that the Passionists are doing in Jiquilisco. I thanked him for the ministry of the Passionists in the Archdiocese. I was pleased to listen to him speak about his trip. He has been visiting many missions in Latin America and he said that the Church in Latin America, especially in some parts like El Salvador, is a Church that is alive, a Church that nourishes and encourages, a Church that is truly the Church of the people. My sisters and brothers, let us preserve these characteristics of the Church because they are the authentic characteristics of the Church.

The Vicar-General of the Maryknoll community, Father Breen, visited us and I thanked him also for the collaboration of the members of his community. They are going to continue their ministry here. We asked for their assistance in Chalatenango and we supported the request of Bishop Rivera who would like them to help in the ministry of the Diocese of Santiago de María.

We have some very good news from our separated sisters and brothers. This week we had a meeting with our sisters and brothers who are members of the Baptist, Episcopal and also the Church of Central America. They agree with us that the gospel in which they place their trust must not be a gospel that is mutilated, accommodating and not incarnated in the realities of the earth. They, like us, are saddened by the way in which the Protestant Church is manipulated. They are welcomed by the government, installed in Cuscatlán and made to feel as though they are the only Church that is faithful to the message of Christ while the Catholic Church is seen as meddling in politics and communism. In other words, the Protestant Church excommunicates the Catholic Church. How beautiful it is to hear then that there are sisters and brothers in the Protestant Church who are not in agreement with this manipulation. They and we are inspired by the same Spirit. They are also aware of the fact that a gospel that does not take into consideration human rights and a Christianity that does not design and build the history of the world is not the authentic doctrine of Christ but rather an instrument of sin. We lament the fact that at some time our Church has fallen into this sin but we want to clothe ourselves in a new attitude and live in accord with this authentic gospel spirituality. We do not want to be toys that are played with, and this is said in regard to the Protestant and Catholic Churches. Even outside the boundaries of the Church we do not want to be toys that are played with by the powers of the earth. Rather we want to be the Church that brings the authentic, courageous message of Jesus Christ to the world, even when, if it is necessary, we must die like Jesus on the cross.

I want to share with you some news about our priests. Our beloved brother, Bishop Revelo, has returned from Rome. There is no schism between Bishop Revelo and the Archbishop of San Salvador. We have been friends for many years and that friendship continues now when we are both trying to fulfill delicate missions. My beloved Catholics, I have told all of you before that I am happy to see your sensitivity in front of these events that

the enemies of the Church want to take advantage of in order to divide us. From the beginning I have said and I repeat it again here: let us not judge him without listening to him.⁹ We know that he is a bishop in communion with the Pope and in communion with the hierarchy of the Archdiocese. Therefore, nothing can break that bond and that friendship of a true messenger of God. Even when there are differences we are able to speak openly about these because in substance we are servants of this Church that does not want to betray either the people or the gospel.

On December 15th the priests are going to meet together to evaluate our ministry of the past year and plan for the coming year.

Tomorrow at five o'clock in the afternoon, in the church of San Juan in Cojutepeque, we are going to commemorate the tragic death and assassination of Father Nicholas Rodríguez who died in 1970. This crime has remained a mystery and Father died an anonymous death. It is only right that now when we remember the heroism of our priests, we should also remember him. I went to claim his body that was already decaying. He had come from hearing the confession of and anointing one the parishioners who was about to pass on to eternal life and he died in the service of his priesthood. We will honor him with special prayers at five o'clock tomorrow. Let us join together in the church in Cojutepeque.

For the communities, you all already know about Quezaltepeque. The declarations of Fr Quinteros alone show what sort of people we are dealing with. The pity is that the enemies of the Church don't care about the about the human value of the instrument they are using to harm it. But the result is painful. Father Quinteros alone has excommunicated: I have not excommunicated him. I have simply said there is a law which automatically punishes with excommunication for the crime he has committed.¹⁰ So there is no hatred or bad will. If there had been bad will, he would not have been offered treatment for tuberculosis in the sanatorium of Los Planes. Nor would he have been received in the diocese of Santiago de María or been offered to discuss the issues with all the good will of a pastor. It is a pity that some politicians from there used these circumstances to harm the Church.

More sad news from Quezaltepeque revolves around the lack of knowledge on the part of some Catholics of the Fraternity of the Holy Burial. Their rebellious and disrespectful attitude toward the authority of the Church, as well as their usurpation of Church property, merits the Church's refusal to recognize them even though they have been officially recognized by the civil authorities. The civil effects and the church building in Quezaltepeque do not interest us but we are concerned that the Church continues to live and to live in communion with the true pastor. The true pastor there is Father Roberto Vandenheneen who together with the Sisters from Belgium have been the victims of abuse, but thanks to God they have given honor to their fidelity to the communion with the Church.

In Cojutepeque we celebrated the anniversary of the enthronement of the Virgin. With great satisfaction, 7,000 devotees of the Virgin, motivated by the word of Father Amado Molina and their pastor Father Ricardo Ayala, prayed for the Church and experienced the confidence that this Church that is protected by a good and powerful Mother like Mary cannot perish.

On November 21, in Tamanique we honored our Lady of Peace. The priests from North America and the Jesuit community participated in this celebration and I was a witness of the intense pastoral ministry that is being done in this area.

Last Sunday afternoon I made a wonderful trip to Panchimalco. The tourism industry has created a beautiful environment there and I congratulate them for their work. I was even happier that in this traditional environment a group of Catholics received the bible to study the Word of God under the zealous direction of Father Pocasange. For the past three days a group of lay people have gathered in Santa Tecla and are participating in a course on the Base Communities of Faith under the direction of Father Palacios. Today in Ciudad Arce we will bless their church and anticipate the celebration of the Immaculate Conception. On November 25, in Apopa, we had the pleasure of celebrating the feast of their patroness, Saint Catherine of Alexandria. Congratulations to Father Martell. Today in Amatepec we will celebrate the sacrament of confirmation with a group of young men and women --- this is how I would like to celebrate Confirmation in all the communities.

The Cursillo Movement is celebrating a new cursillo and next Sunday there will be a national gathering in Santiago de María in El Colegio Santa Gema. Everyone is invited to participate in this event.

I conclude with a personal note. The person who signed their letter Magdalena Mártir can feel satisfied with their humble confession, their repentance and their resolution. Be calm! I thank you for your courage in denouncing a clinic and a doctor here in San Salvador --- what we could call a clinic and doctors of abortion. Abortions are being performed there. I do not say this as propaganda but as a condemnation. This is a crime and no doctor or clinic has a right to dedicate themselves to this kind of action.

My sisters and brothers, these events of the nation, of sin, of the Kingdom of God, of the Church are the events that we want to enlighten with the three readings that we have heard and that could be synthesized with the title: the Church of hope. Yes, let us be encouraged in our hope! The first reading presents us with a luminous goal and the second reading from Saint Paul presents with a path that we can walk in order to arrive at this goal. Finally, in the third reading, Christ presents us with the great surprise that we will encounter at the end of the road.

A luminous goal

The first reading from Isaiah places us within the context of the difficult political and social situation which the prophet had to confront. This situation is similar to our present situation. The country called into question the covenant with God and they wanted to form an alliance with Egypt in order to defend themselves from the power of the Assyrians. Isaiah calls upon the power of God and calls the people to trust in God and not betray the covenant. Then he speaks these words of hope: *This Jerusalem isolated and fearful is the city that God has chosen. There the light of God will shine and the Temple of the Lord will be established. The Gentiles and numerous people will stream toward it and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of Yahweh, to the house of God". From there a law will be proclaimed that will rule the people with justice. A true doctrine will change the instrument of war into tools for work. The disorder will be changed into peace and justice and love (e).*

These things appear to be an illusion and I imagine that as Isaiah spoke these words of love there were many violent groups who wanted to resolve the situation through the sword and power. Yet Isaiah never tired of proclaiming his words of peace.

My sisters and brothers, this is the goal, a goal that was pointed out by the prophets and a goal that the Church continues to point out. The enemies of the Church, those who do not want her to speak and those who discredit her say: *The Church preaches violence and politics and communism --- distortions of sin.* But those who overcome the powers of evil and listen to the authentic Church hear the echo of Isaiah, the echo of Christ and the echo of the prophets.

We have never preached violence, except the violence of love which left Christ nailed to a cross. We have never preached violence except the violence that we must each do to ourselves to overcome selfishness and such cruel inequalities among us. The violence we preach is not the violence of the sword, the violence of hatred. It is the violence of love, of brotherhood, the violence that chooses to beat weapons into sickles for work.(f) What a beautiful call we are able to make here, my sisters and brothers, when work abounds in our fields --- do not change this work into hatred or struggles or bloodshed. Since last Sunday I have been saying that those who harvest the coffee and cotton and sugar cane should make their work a hymn of praise. Do not wait for laws but may you be inspired in that love of brotherhood that unites the owners of the fields with the workers. May we make our fields a hymn that is sung in honor of God's generosity, the God who gifts us with these harvests. This is our goal so let us walk toward this peace.

A path toward this luminous goal

The second reading opens before us the path to this goal. Saint Paul exhorts us to clothe ourselves in Christ and put aside the works of darkness: *no more orgies and drunkenness, no more promiscuity and licentiousness, no more rivalry and jealousy.* (g) See how the Bible is unable to accept vice and sin! He speaks of the person who is walking through the night and sees the day approaching. If this person has spent the night in sin, Saint Paul says: *Wake up and throw off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Do not allow death to surprise you in your sin. Do not allow the paths of light to surprise you when you are walking on the path of darkness. Clothe yourselves in Christ. Christ is the way* (h). Jesus himself has said: *I am the way* (i).

My sisters and brothers, when we preach the Lord's Word, we decry not only the injustices of the social order. We decry every sin that is night, every sin that is darkness: drunkenness, gluttony, lust, adultery, abortion --- everything that is the reign of iniquity and sin. Let them all disappear from our society. Only by walking on the paths of light and honesty and holiness, only by clothing ourselves with Christ even though we have sinned, only by repentance and conversion to the Lord --- only in this way can we walk toward the goal and establish a true peace.

The great surprise of where this road leads us

Finally my sisters and brothers, the gospel of Saint Matthew presents us Christ who exhorts us with a terrible comparison. At the time of the flood the people laughed at Noah who was building an ark and thought he was crazy. The gospel tells us that they continued to rejoice in their own way of life, marrying and giving in marriage (cf. Matthew 24:38). They did not expect the end that was so near when the rains began to fall and flood the earth. Noah, faithful to God, was saved with his family while a whole sinful race was washed away with the purifying waters of the flood. The gospel says the same will happen when the Son of Man comes again (j).

The Advent Season that begins today and concludes on Christmas wants us to understand what I have previously spoken to you about, namely, the meaning of eschatology, the final times. Seven centuries before Christ the prophet Isaiah announced that with the coming of Christ, the Son of God who would become man, the final phase of history would begin. How long will it last? We do not know the answer to that question but Saint Paul tells us that we are now in that time, that hour. We are close to that time that was first proclaimed by the prophets. Now we live in the eschatological hour because Christ, with his incarnation and resurrection, has placed before humanity the final opportunity to save themselves. Salvation begins on this earth. Salvation means liberation --- true liberation from sin, from selfishness, from illiteracy, from hunger --- freedoms of the earth that prepare us for the great freedom of the Kingdom of God.

The risen Christ ought to be light for men and women to mold and construct history. Christ has to be the inspiration of the laws that are given to people. Laws should not result from the whim of some powerful group but should result from the will of God who perhaps will ask for the conversion of sinners. The law of Christ is the eschatology. Only those who live in conformity to Christ here on earth will be invited to participate in the eternal life of God.

With the image of an abduction the gospel speaks to us about this great truth. We are told: *then of two men in the fields one is taken, one left; of two women at the millstone grinding, one is taken, one left* (k). In other words, on this earth the differences do not disappear, we all work, but some will be taken by God for the kingdom and others will be left behind.

How sad it is to be left behind, to remain marginalized from the Kingdom of God. This is indeed living on the margins, to be separated, waiting and asking: *And what about us, Lord?* And the gospel reply on one occasion: *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, because I was hungry and you didn't give me to eat*" : (l) that is, you didn't live the eschatology in the Christian sense I wanted when I came on earth to make myself a man, to die for men, to rise to give them new life and a message of liberation. Blessed those who received me! These are the accepted ones. Whereas the others... How many will they be? We don't know because it is a mystery of eschatology. But a mystery we can solve in our favour, beginning this Advent, preparing for Christmas, calling to repentance, converting to Christ, clothing ourselves in Christ. And human considerations are of little importance when, in our deep conscience, we are full of joy in trying to be faithful to Christ, our Saviour.

Hopefully these words of Advent, framed in the very intense history of this past week, might be heard above all the murmurings of the earth. The voice of the Lord is clear: *Be sure of this: if the master of the house had known the hour of night when the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and not let his house be broken into. So too, you also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of man will come* (m). Vigilance is a spiritual disposition that should be our focus during this time of preparation for Christmas. Christ is coming and we do not await him like the children who believe that he will bring them toys. We await the Lord as Christians who know that the Lord has come, but the Lord has proclaimed that he will come a second time and surprise us on the path of life. He will gather us up from the place where we die and we will enter with him to reign. Because of our virtue and holiness we ought to reign with him.

Let us be true Christians, worthy of this eschatological hour, this period between the first and the second coming of Christ, the final period of history. Let us know how to live during this time, that is, let us know that this is not a permanent situation but a passing situation. Let us not become attached and accommodated here. Let us not allow the goods and the power of this earth to rob us of the beauty of the Kingdom of God. As a person is abducted and taken away without leaving behind any trace so it is that God is coming to take us, but we will be abducted by the love of Christ who bring us for all eternity into his heaven. So be it.

¹ The greeting and opening words not recorded on the homily tape.

² The *Ley de Defensa y Garantía del Orden Público* was approved by the Legislative Assembly on 24 November 1977. See *Diario Oficial*, 25 November 1977, vol. 257, pp. 2-5.

³ St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1-2, q. 90 a. 4.

⁴ St Augustine, *On free will*, Book One, ch. 5; PL 32, 1227.

⁵ St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Teologica*, 1-2, q. 95, a. 2.

⁶ See St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Teologica* 1-2, q. 92, a. 2.

⁷ See “La palabra del arzobispo. Libertad para la catequesis”, *Orientación*, 27n November 1977.

⁸ Reference to the “Comité de Madres y Familiares de Presos, Desaparecidos y Asesinados Políticos de El Salvador” (COMADRES).

⁹ The auxiliary bishop of Santa Ana, Mons. Marco René Revelo, who took part in the Synod of Bishops in the Vatican from 30 September to 29 October 1977, on the theme “Catechesis in our time”, made some controversial statements questioning the actions of some priests and catechists in El Salvador whom he accused of following the positions of “extremist groups”. These declarations were presented in incomplete and exaggerated form by the national press. See “Revelaciones del Obispo santaneco”, *El Mundo*, 4 October 1977.

¹⁰ Fr Antonio Pineda Quinteros was removed from the parish of Quezaltepeque but refused to hand it over and lent himself to the manipulation of this fact by extreme rightwing groups. See “Excomulgan a monseñor Romero. Párroco de Quezaltepeque acusa al arzobispo de predicar el odio”. *La Opinión*, November 1977.

Margin References (a) SC 102: (b) Ex 12,25-27: (c) M 2,16: (d) Lk 17,12: (e) Is 2,1-5: (f) Is 2,4: (g) Rm 13,13: (h) Rm 13,11: (i) Jn 14,6: (j) Mt 24,37: (k) Mt 24,40-41: (l) Mt 25,41-42: (m) Mt 24,42-43.