

PENTECOST: SPIRIT AND LIFE OF THE NEW COVENANT

Feast of Pentecost
June 3, 1979

Acts 2:1-11

1 Corinthian 12:3b-7, 12-13

John 20:19-23

My dear sisters and brothers.

Pentecost is a feast that celebrates youth and therefore this morning I am happy to place on the altar of celebration these two magnificent expressions of our youth: the young men and women who have been prepared to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and the young men from our seminary. There are approximately four hundred young men from the Interdiocesan Major Seminary, the various minor seminaries of the diocese and seminarians from religious congregations. All of this proclaims the fact that the Church is always young and that young people, those who have been called to religious life and who fill our seminaries and novitiates and houses of formation and those young women and men who have not received the call to religious life but who nonetheless have to fulfill in the world the commitment that they received at the time of their birth and that gives meaning to their life --- this is a sign that the Church is always young, always in a phase of renewal. The Holy Spirit is the soul of this renewal and spirituality.

If there is ever some time when the feast of the Holy Spirit takes on an element of urgency, then I believe that time is now when we experience so much confusion, so many false voices of redemption, so much materialism and selfishness, so much hatred and violence. It is a wonderful time to experience this longing for justice and truth and the Absolute and transcendence, all of which correspond to a profound desire of the human person that can only be filled by the Spirit of God who comes to take possession of us and fills the emptiness that we experience. Saint Augustine looked at the world for solutions to his problems but did not find the answer and said: *You have made us Lord for you and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you.*¹

My dear young men and women, this explains why so many times you look for these spiritual paths that instead of fulfilling the person make even more mysterious the thirst for the infinite that is a part of everyone. Look at how many people seek these spiritual paths in false Gnosticism and eastern religions. Look --- and this is even worse ---- at how many people try to avoid all of this and seek fulfillment in drugs and vices and pleasure, in struggles of violence and revolution and guerrilla warfare. Look at how many young women and men have been lost! They have this longing for justice and the Absolute and spiritual realities but become intoxicated in the midst of the realities of the here and now. Do not lose this longing! Do not seek to satisfy this longing on distorted paths!

The Church has a response for your longing and is giving that response today on this feast of Pentecost. This feast has Biblical origins. It began as a feast of thanksgiving during the harvest season. Pentecost refers to fifty days, seven weeks --- seven weeks after gathering

together the first sheaves, when the harvest was completed, people offered the first fruits to the Lord and gave thanks for a bountiful harvest. Previously the Jews celebrated this feast annually to commemorate the establishment of the Mosaic covenant on Sinai. Pentecost was an occasion to renew their commitment to the covenant. Christianity gave a more profound meaning to this celebration. Pentecost, the number fifty, is a symbol of perfection and fullness. Therefore fifty days after the resurrection of Christ is the fullness of the Easter season, a time of full and complete joy,(1) a time in which we are given the gift of peace that no one can take away. Thus Pentecost is celebrated and we remember the fullness of Christ's resurrection and ascension into heaven. Pentecost commemorates the coming of the Spirit of Christ, sent by the Father and the Son just as Jesus had promised: *It is better for you that I go. For if I do not go the Advocate will not come to you* (2). Jesus commanded his disciples to pray just like these young women and men have been preparing themselves by prayer for Confirmation. On a day like today the Holy Spirit came and the Church was born. The Easter season comes to a close and now our weekly celebration of the Eucharist as well as our Christian lives that are lived out in different ways are profoundly marked by the Spirit. We are called to be witnesses of the Pentecost event, witnesses to the Spirit of Christ who has come to all Christians.

Today as we celebrate the fullness of the Easter season I am happy to present to you a summary of the mysteries of Christian redemption. Those of you who have followed the line of thought that has given a unity to our preaching and not just focused on the aspects that refer to the political and social realities of the earth, those of you who as loyal Christians have sincerely followed the development of our thinking during Lent and Holy Week and Easter and not slandered us by declaring that our preaching is some form of political discourse --- you can see that the theme that has united the ideas and thoughts that I want to share with you as a community, the People of God that I want to nourish with the Word of God, has been a lengthy and profound reflection on redemption viewed from the perspective of the covenant between God and the people.

The readings that were proclaimed during the Sundays of Lent provided us with an opportunity to examine the preparations that foreshadowed and announced the redemption of humankind. The rainbow that God used to establish the first covenant with Noah was a sign that God was the Lord of all creation and that nature would not be destroyed again by a flood. People had to commit themselves to preserve, care for, share justly, and come to an understanding that the things of nature were gifts from God and therefore should not be squandered. We then applied this word to the urgent need to preserve the goods that commit us to God. It is frightening to hear from all parts of the world about the scarcity of oil, the contamination of the atmosphere, and the lack of water. In fact certain parts of San Salvador receive water for a period of minutes each day, the water levels are drying up and the beautiful mountain rivers have disappeared. The covenant that God established with women and men is not being fulfilled because people believe that they are the lords of nature and have exploited nature.

During the Sundays of Lent we also reflected on the covenant that God established with Abraham and Moses. Then we saw that the prophets proclaimed that God would make a new covenant with humankind.

We then presented Holy Week as a celebration of the new covenant: on Palm Sunday the people went out to meet the mediator of the new covenant, on Holy Thursday the people received the commandment of the new covenant, the commandment of love, and on Good

Friday we reflected on the price that was paid to establish this covenant as Christ handed over his life to the Father. On Easter Sunday and the Sundays that followed we reflected on the fruits of this new covenant, the Easter joy, eternal life, and the renewal of the world that was initiated by the Risen Christ.

Then last Sunday, the feast of the Ascension of the Lord, we were invited to reflect on the reality of transcendence that gives meaning to our lives and to the events of history. When people lose this perspective of the path of the Redeemer who invites us to consummate the covenant with the Father, the Absolute, the creator of all things, then people break the covenant with God and attempt to resolve personal and societal problems by themselves and this is always ineffective. Thus today we arrive at the conclusion of the Easter season and celebrate the feast of the Holy Spirit.

I entitle my homily today: *Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit who gives life to the new covenant*. I will develop the following points: First, the visible signs of Pentecost; Second, the invisible content of these signs; Third, the Church, the covenant that is enlivened by the Spirit.

The visible signs of Pentecost

We have heard the signs mentioned in the readings. First, however, I would like us to reflect on how the Church, in accord with Jesus' pedagogy, continues to speak through signs. Signs are like a language and so if one does not understand the language, one does not know what is being said. This is precisely what happens when we receive the signs, the sacraments, and have not been prepared for this with an appropriate catechesis like that which these young women and men received.

The signs are an unknown language and as a result we have not given a meaning to our baptism or confirmation or any of the other sacraments. Love in marriage is not simply the love between a man and a woman. There is a sign in this love and if married people do not discover this sign then they are unable to live the profound meaning of their marriage. Confirmation is a sign and if we do not discover the meaning of this sign then it remains like an unknown language. What is the meaning of the bishop anointing the forehead of the candidates with oil of chrism? If we do not have any knowledge of this then it would be better not to receive this sacrament. Why would a person come forward to receive a sign that one does not know the meaning of?

The same would occur if there had been no catechesis to prepare people for Pentecost. The signs of the Spirit that appear in today's reading are: a noise in the sky, a strong driving wind, tongues of fire that came to rest on the apostles and the Virgin.(3) The gospel speaks of another sign, namely, Jesus breathes on the apostles and gives them strength.(4) These are the signs! But what is the meaning of the act of one man breathing on another? What is the meaning of the strong driving winds and the tongues of fire? These are the signs of Pentecost.

The invisible content of these signs

What is the invisible content of these signs? It is necessary to discover the meaning of the signs of Pentecost in order to understand the meaning of this multitude that has gathered

here in the Cathedral, as well as the meaning of the people who gather together in so many different communities to celebrate the Eucharist. It is also necessary to discover the meaning of the signs of Pentecost in order to understand the meaning of the Christian life. There is no meaning to all of this unless we discover what has happened this Sunday that is hidden in something mysterious and yet very great --- something mysterious and great in the sign of Jesus breathing on the apostles, the strong winds and the tongues of fire.

I am going to reduce the message of Pentecost to four marks or characteristics: One, the gift of the Spirit; Two, the forgiveness of sin and the life that is restored to women and men as a result of this forgiveness; Three, faith; Four, the ability to go throughout the world and preach in tongues the only message that saves.

First, the content of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Within a few moments I am going to place oil of chrism on the forehead of each young person and say: *through this sign receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*. What is the gift of the Holy Spirit? The first reading tells us: *they were all filled with the Holy Spirit* (5). In the gospel Jesus explain the meaning of his breathing upon the disciples when he says: *receive the Holy Spirit* (6). These gestures are similar to those that are found in the book of Genesis when God breathes his all-powerful word on the chaos: *Let there be light! let creation come about! And God saw how good all of this was* (7). Pentecost is a new Genesis. Today a new world comes into existence. Today the Spirit of God is given to the world as a gift. Blessed are those men and women who understand all of this because in their hearts eternity has been born, in their hearts the hope for a better world has been born. They are no longer overwhelmed by historical, political and social problems because they know that the movement of the Spirit is present in their midst filling all things with a life that no one can restrain. Indeed the Spirit will come! The Council refers to the Spirit in the following way: *the Holy Spirit was sent on the day of Pentecost in order that He might continually sanctify the Church, and thus, all those who believe would have access through Christ in one Spirit to the Father* (8). What a profound thought! The Spirit comes!

What is the Spirit? The Spirit is the one who from all eternity is united with the Father and the Son in a mysterious relationship. *Everything that the Father has is mine and everything that I have is the Father's* (9). Who creates this absolute unity between the persons of the Blessed Trinity?(10) The Holy Spirit is the power that unites them. This same Spirit that unites the Father and the Son is communicated to us and blessed are those who understand this movement that envelops women and men and unites them with the Father and the Son. Listen once again to the words of the Council: *the Holy Spirit was sent on the day of Pentecost in order that He might continually sanctify the Church, and thus, all those who believe would have access through Christ in one Spirit to the Father* (11). The Spirit unites us to Christ and Christ is the Son who is united with the Father. United by the Spirit in the Son we are a family with the Father. This is the People of God.

Let us not confuse people in general with the People of God. Political and popular organizations should not say that they are the people but rather should say that they are one part of the people. The Church should also not be confused with all the people because there are incredulous people who do not believe in this unity with the Spirit. Thanks to God there are many faithful people who, as the Council states: *in His goodness and wisdom God chose to reveal Himself and to make known to us the hidden purpose of His will by which through Christ, the Word made flesh, man might in the Holy Spirit have access to the Father and come to share in the divine nature*. From the perspective of our present life let us live with the perspective of eternal life. Indeed, there is no reason to have to wait for death in order to

possess eternal life. Christians who have allowed themselves to be possessed by the Spirit and who have united themselves to Christ are already living in communion with Christ. Death will simply be like breaking the container that held this reality.

How beautiful is the Christian life when seen as this pouring out of the gifts of the Spirit. My beloved young women and men who are going to be confirmed today --- this is what is going to happen to you. You are going to be filled with the Spirit of God and through this Spirit which is the Spirit of Christ you will become united with Christ. Therefore in Christ maintain an intimate relationship with the Father. Remain united with and strengthen yourself in this Divine life.

What is the other content of the signs of Pentecost? Jesus has said: *Whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven them* (12). These words refer to the power of redemption that uproots sin from women and men and through grace makes them children of God. This is the Holy Spirit and there is a relationship between the forgiveness of sin and true human promotion. Human promotion does not simply consist of taking people out of a state of poverty so that they can have money. It would make no sense to have money if human promotion were not also concerned about making people children of God. True human promotion is that which raises up the human person and makes women and men holy. This is true human promotion: holiness. The Spirit of holiness is in our midst precisely to uproot people from their passions, idolatries, sins, disorders, selfishness and injustices. Let us give thanks to God that the Church fulfills this duty and therefore do not become upset when the Church points out those situations of sin that exist in the world. The Church desires to uproot sin from the lives of her children. When the Church tells the political powers that they should not become abusive and tells the economic powers that they also should not become abusive -- this simply means that the Church is fulfilling her obligation to overthrow sin as it exists in the world and is developing women and men along the true paths of human promotion and holiness.

What more is involved in the gifts of the Spirit? Here I want to briefly reflect on faith. Today's second reading speaks to us about a reality which, if we do not understand it, can appear to be ridiculous: *Nobody can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit* (13). True, materially speaking anyone can say *Jesus is Lord* but here we are referring to this as a conviction and a profession of faith that leads people to worship Jesus so that they will not commit adultery in their hearts. People cannot affirm Jesus as Lord and then worship other idols such as money and social power and materialism. How many there are that would do better not to call themselves Christians because they have no faith! They have more faith in their money and possessions than in the God who fashioned their possessions and their money. Therefore Jesus is Lord, but only people of faith can proclaim these words and this faith is given to us by the Spirit. No one can say with the conviction of faith that Jesus is the only God except those who have been wrapped in the mantle of faith and anointed with this knowledge that God alone possesses. When Peter responded to Jesus' question: *Who do people say that the Son of Man is?* (14) he had listened to the different opinions of people and some of them said he was a prophet or a great philosopher or a great man. But Jesus continued: *These answers do not satisfy me. You who have lived with me for such a long time and have listened to my teachings, who do you say I am?* (15). Peter raised his voice and said: *You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.* Jesus congratulates Peter and said: *Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my heavenly Father* (16).

Only people of faith who are encouraged and strengthened by the Spirit are able to believe in Christ. My own sad experience leads me to say that there are many people who call themselves Christian and pray to Christ but they do not know Jesus as Lord because they are Christians without faith. Yes, we have among us many non-believers who have been baptized and confirmed. These people have received the sacraments but they have not studied the content of the signs that they have received and have not allowed the Spirit of God to take possession of their lives. On the contrary they have rejected the Spirit. If there is anything that makes me sad in my ministry it is the rejection that I have experienced from people --- it is as though people are convinced that I am trying to inflict upon them some evil when I only wish to do that which is good. My consolation is found in Christ who also tried to communicate this great mystery but was also misunderstood and called a rebel and sentenced to death just like the threats that have been made against me during these days.²

What other gifts does the Spirit give us? It is beautiful to understand all of this! The Pentecost event is marvelous. *How does each of us hear them in his own native language?* (17). How wonderful this gift of preaching to the whole world! That miracle is being accomplished today because what I am saying here in the Cathedral in San Salvador, these words that I am proclaiming with my poor Spanish are being proclaimed in North America in English by the preachers who are celebrating the Eucharist there. The same is also being proclaimed in the dialects of our indigenous people by the missionaries who go into the jungles of Colombia and Guatemala or whatever other part of the southern hemisphere. The same message is being proclaimed in French in Canada and France by the priests who minister in those regions of the world. The message is also being proclaimed in Italian and the many African dialects. This morning and at all times it is the same Church that is preaching in many languages the same message of God. It is a message that cannot be changed.

It's amusing. This week I received accusations from both extremes --- from the extreme right that I am a communist³, from the extreme left that I am going to the right⁴. I am not with the right or with the left. I am trying to be faithful to the Word that the Lord bids me to preach, to the message that cannot change, which tells both sides the good they do and the injustices they commit. I believe that we have given a very clear witness that the gift of the Spirit, the gift that I attempt to be faithful to, gives us the ability to be able to identify the true Church. Only those of ill-will will identify the Church with other languages that in our time are a part of Babylon, a place where each day people want to claim victory, a place where groups who struggle for the just demands of people are in competition with one another. The voice of the Church is most clear. One day Jesus said: *I have spoken to you the things that my Father has revealed to me. Do you also want to leave?*(18) Peter responded: *Master, to whom shall we go. You have the words of eternal life* (19). My sisters and brothers, do not focus on the defects that a preacher might have but rather ask the Holy Spirit for the grace to understand the message that he desires to bring to the world.

The Church, the new covenant that is enlivened by the Spirit

The third point: the Church is the new covenant enlivened by the Spirit. Twenty centuries ago Pentecost inaugurated a new era. The prophets announced this as the messianic era, a new era inspired by the Spirit. This era that we are presently living, this era after the death of Christ, is called the era of the Spirit.

This is the time when the Church acts as a sign --- the seed, the power and the driving force that unites God and humanity. The Council states: *So it is that that messianic people, although it does not actually include all men, and at times may look like a small flock, is nonetheless a lasting and sure seed of unity, hope and salvation for the whole human race* (20). Jesus said: *Do not be afraid any longer, little flock, for your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom* (21). We ought to feel a holy pride in the fact that our Church possesses the seed of a new world, the power of hope and a bright light that pierces the darkness and clouds. The Church is a sign of the presence of God who has begun a new creation by breathing forth the spirit of the Risen Christ: *Receive the Holy Spirit* (22).

At this time I want to focus on today's second reading where we are presented with a wonderful element of the Church: unity in diversity. There is only one Spirit who gives a certain gift to some people and another gift to other people. Some people are called to one way of life and other people to another way of life. Today, Seminary Day, we should be mindful of the fact that some young people are called to the consecrated life and others are not, but all people are called to be Christian: engineers, doctors, lawyers, workers, *campesinos*, women in the market place, housewives --- it does not matter the place that one occupies in society, what is important is what the reading proclaimed: *we were all given to drink of one Spirit* (23). The Spirit gives unity. Saint Paul compares this unity in diversity to the body. (24) As the body has organs with different functions, as all the parts of the body work together for the unity of the organism, so too the Holy Spirit has given gifts, vocations, and charisms so that all of these bring about a unity. Let us move toward unity! Let us not divide or separate ourselves from one another! If I do not understand another Christian I must still respect that person because if I truly love the Church then I must realize that even this person whom I do not understand is serving the unity of the Church, just as I, from my perspective of a sincere love for the Church, am also serving the unity of the Church. I should not criticize this person because he/she does not act or think like I do. I have to accommodate myself to the will of the Holy Spirit who gives unity and life to the Church.

My dear young women and men who will be confirmed, my dear seminarians, I am optimistic when I think of you as the persons who renew the Church. Who can describe the treasure that each one of you possess if you allow yourselves to be led by the Holy Spirit. Do not destroy the ideals that God wishes to share with each one of you! Be instruments of the Holy Spirit in the place where you have been destined to develop your life: the seminarians as you move toward priesthood according to the plan of God, lay women and men as you obtain your diploma or prepare yourselves as professionals, humble workers and *campesinos* --- your position in society is not important because all are exhorted to be instruments of the Holy Spirit.

Life of the Church

In light of this perspective let us look at the reality in which we are living, the reality in which we, a pilgrim people of 1979, have been placed. Today, Pentecost, finds us in a very difficult situation, one that can almost rob us of our ability to love in the Holy Spirit.

Yesterday, the Pope, the head of the People of God, journeyed to Poland. In the center of Warsaw, after a representative of the communist government welcomed him and said that the government was working for peace and the unification of the country, the Pope expressed his concern for the respect of human rights and said: *There can be no peace without freedom!*⁵ This is the voice of the Church, the Spirit who encourages the Pope in the exercise of his

universal role as he visits Poland, as he finds himself in the midst of a Christian community ruled by a communist government. This is the voice that experiences a holy freedom and that in a country like Mexico is free to speak out about the realities that are reflected in the world of Latin America. This is the same Spirit that speaks in other situations and cries out: *hopefully people who attack the freedom of the Church do not call themselves Christian.*

This is the Holy Spirit that encourages the young men who are being renewed in our seminaries. On this celebration of Seminary Day I invite you to reflect on the responses of the seminarians to the question: *why do you want to be a priest?* Their responses were published in the newspaper *Orientación*⁶. One said: *I want to be a priest in order to save people from sin and lead them along the path of Christ;* another said: *I want to be a priest in order to be able to respond faithfully to Christ's call that I am clarifying as I move through the formation process;* another: *I want to promote justice among individuals and in society and together with people who struggle for peace and unity and create fraternity by handing over my love and life to God and to my sisters and brothers.* Another seminarian said: *I want to be a priest because I want to run the risk that very few young people are willing to take.* My dear young people, the seminary and the vocation to the priesthood do not corrupt people but rather I believe that people with their conditioning as lay people in the world, especially in certain social spheres of life, often discourage the hopes and the desires of young people. I was very pleased to hear the words: *I want to run the risk that very few young people are willing to take because I want to be a sign of unity among the People of God and proclaim Good News to those in need. In this way I make Christ and his gospel present in the world, present in a more complete and committed manner.* Notice that another seminarian says: *at this time the priesthood is for some a necessity and for others foolishness.* This seminarian identifies himself with the cross of which Saint Paul wrote: *we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles* (25).

On this celebration of Seminary Day I want to thank the young men from other seminaries who raised their voices on our behalf. A young man from Saint Philip of Jesus Seminary in Los Angeles, California expressed his admiration for our Archdiocese and promised to pray for peace in El Salvador. Ramón Rolden from the seminary of the Immaculate Conception in New York wrote: *Even though we have never met I admire your struggle which is so important in our own time when fear and injustice dominate the lives of so many people.* Seminarians, together with priests, religious women and lay people from San José, Costa Rica, a group numbering more than two hundred fifty persons, have also sent an expression of their solidarity: *We unite ourselves to world opinion and condemn the institutionalized violation of human rights. We express our solidarity with you and your Church and we denounce the situation of sin that cries out to heaven and so we join together with the liberating pastoral commitment of your Archdiocese.*

During these weeks and days our community has lived through some very disheartening events. I do not want to abuse your time and so I will just refer to the meetings of the religious Sisters who analyzed the case of the Guadalupeana Sisters who were removed from Arcatao and in a very deceitful way sent to Guatemala. Thanks to God the government has corrected their mistake and even though the Sisters have been accused, yet there is no proof of these accusations nor can anyone define the exact nature of these accusations. Here I want to say that the Sisters have the complete support of their Archbishop. Their preaching is in no way contrary to the guidelines that the Church outlines for pastoral ministers. I also want to defend Father Modesto Villarán from Soyapango and Father José Luis Burguet, faithful

collaborators whom I know very well and therefore I cannot believe the vile slanders that have been published about them during these days,.

We are also moved by the tragic death of Father Cabanillas, the pastor of San Jacinto, who died in an automobile accident in Santa Rosa de Lima.

I also want to greet and congratulate several communities, religious and lay, who are promoting prayer. We need much prayer in our Diocese. There is no doubt that the Spirit of God knows how to respond to these prayers that I experience as a vital force in the pastoral ministry of our Archdiocese. I take advantage of this feast of the Holy Spirit to remind you that the Spirit prays in our hearts the most beautiful prayer that could be raised up to heaven because it is inspired by the same Spirit of God who is with us and urges us to continue to pray in the way that a sister told me: *we pray often for you so that you might be given the gift of discernment*. We lack this gift at this time and we need to know how to distinguish between that which is good and that which is evil, that which is deceitful, ambiguous or true. With the help of the Holy Spirit I believe that we are carrying out this difficult but consoling task especially because we are able to rely on your prayers.

Events of the week

You know that recently the Cathedral and the church El Calvario were occupied by FAPU. I want to express my agreement with Msgr. Modesto López, the rector of the Cathedral, who said: *the Church is certainly for the people but the Church has a purpose and an objective because the Church is a house of prayer. Let us not forget this and let us not pervert this objective of the Church by using it for other profane objectives*.

As long as the repairs continue at YSAX I ask you to remain in contact with the thinking of the Archdiocese by reading our newspaper *Orientación* and the other bulletins that we are going to be sent to the pastors so that they can be read at all the Masses.

This week has also been characterized by violence and tension: the abduction of Miguel Miguel⁷, the assassination of the Swiss delegate,⁸ the assassination of several union leaders⁹ and leaders in the teachers' movement¹⁰. During the month of May one hundred fifteen people have died and this includes members of the Security Forces, ORDEN, NPR and other groups. The number of people whose bodies are found along the highways of our country continues to increase. Our Legal Aid Society has traveled to many places to help families (at least ten families) identify bodies that were exhumed from places where they had been secretly buried. Our Legal Aid lawyers have said that within a short time they will only be taking care of dead people whose bodies are unearched rather than defending the living.

Fifty-five persons have been arrested this month and thirty of these people have become cases of persons who have disappeared. This is a sad reality in our country. A mother of one of these persons has a serious heart problem and has received no response to her question: *where is my son?*

Ninety-two people have been wounded, sixty-four vehicles burned, twenty-eight businesses burned, machine-gunned, stoned or destroyed. Among the businesses affected was the General Inspection of Electrical Services. I had the impression that the services provided by this business benefited many people and helped sustain many families. Such

indiscriminate violence and taking advantage of these circumstances in order to carry out acts of vengeance --- all of this is irrational violence.

We call upon the government not to abuse the State of Siege. If it is true that people were arrested during a wake service and the only person who was left in place was the deceased¹¹, then it can be asked: *how is this law to be understood?* This is simply the fruit of some form of legalism in which the law puts aside the human person because a great human principle has been forgotten: *the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath* (26).

In this environment of violence I issued a statement¹² in which I spoke about people from other countries who are in our midst. What motivated this was the death of the delegate from the Swiss Embassy and the situation of the diplomats in the French Embassy. I reminded people: *These violent actions against people from other countries who are sent here to maintain and strengthen the bonds of friendship between their country and ours --- such acts are never justified because the relationships between these countries have always been one of hospitality. Therefore they should not be pressured to violate their principle of non-intervention.* But I also warned the diplomatic corps that *they have a certain power and can collaborate with our people in the just defense of human rights because these rights are human, universal and explicitly affirmed by all civilized nations and this principle is on a higher level than that of non-intervention.*

I also spoke about the citizens of other countries who come to work here: *how much benefit could we all receive if we all worked together to achieve the desire that was expressed in Puebla: help us to overcome the barriers of our underdevelopment while respecting our culture, our principles, our sovereignty and our natural resources. It is in this spirit that we will grow together as fellow members of the same universal family.* I also stated that in light of the hopelessness of so many people, the Church always has a word of hope: *Neither the violence of social injustice or the violence of repression, or the violence employed by those seeking to achieve the just demands of our people --- violence that involves arrogance, vengeance or resentment --- none of these can offer a solution to the evident social-political decomposition of our country. The only way to find an effective way out of this present snare is through a sincere return to justice and love, a mutual respect of human rights and a mutual understanding of all the people of El Salvador that is achieved by a true dialogue that is undertaken and based on a foundation of a reestablished credibility that has been achieved by acts that restore people's trust.* In a special way I ask Christians to have recourse to the power of prayer that reveals a trust in God who can make all things new.

So I conclude by reminding you that our nation should be filled with hope as we celebrate this feast of the Holy Spirit who renews the face of the earth. Today when the doors of heaven were opened to send us the Spirit of God, let us open our hearts to this hope and may each one of us be a collaborator with God and an instrument in establishing peace and love and justice. I say this especially to the young women and men who today celebrate this feast in some special way: the seminarians on the celebration of Seminary Day and the young women and men who are going to receive the sacrament of Confirmation.

¹ St Augustine, *Confessions*, I, 1, PL. 32, 661.

² In his pastoral diary (1 June 1979) Mons. Romero recounts he has received phone calls and a note from the Unión Guerrera Blanca threatening his with death unless he changed his preaching. See *Monseñor Oscar A. Romero, Su diario*, San Salvador, 2000, p. 188.

³ The Asociación Patriótica Libertad o Esclavitud published a statement which accused Mons. Romero of being the “portavoz del equipo marxista que le envuelve, absorve y manipula”. See *La Prensa Gráfica*, 30 May 1979.

⁴ In the papers of this week no declaration or statement of the left-wing organizations to this effect has been found.

⁵ In the discourse referred to by Mons. Romero we have not found the quotation he mentions. See Greeting of John Paul II arriving at the airport of Okęcie (2 June 1979), *Osservatore Romano*, 10 June 1979.

⁶ See “¿ Por qué quiero ser sacerdote?”, *Orientación*, 3 June 1979.

⁷ Mr Miguel Armando Migul, owner of the shop Mike Mike, was kidnapped on 29 May 1979. See *La Prensa Gráfica*, 30 May 1979.

⁸ Mr Hugh Wey, chargé d'affaires for Switzerland in El Salvador, was assassinated 30 May 1979. See *La Prensa Gráfica*, 31 May 1979.

⁹ On 27 May Mercedes Recinbos, director of the Federación Nacional Sindical de Trabajadores Salvadoreños (FENASTRAS) was assassinated. See *La Crónica del Pueblo*, 28 May 1979.

¹⁰ ANDES announced in a statement a strike as a sign of grief for the assassination of 11 teachers belonging to the organization. See *La Crónica del Pueblo*, 2 June 1979.

¹¹ See *La Crónica del Pueblo*, 28 May 1979.

¹² “Ese no es el camino. También los extranjeros son nuestros hermanos” (30 May 1979), *Orientación*, 3 June 1979. There follow several quotations from this message which was published in *La Prensa Gráfica*, 1 June 1979.

Marginal References (1) Jn 15,11; (2) Jn 16,7; (3) Ac 2,2-3; (4) Jn 20,22; (5) Ac 2,4; (6) Jn 20,22; (7) Gn 13ff; (8) LG 4; (9) Jn 16,15; (10) Jn 17,10; (11) LG 4; (12) Jn 20,23; (13) 1Cor 12,3b; (14) Mt 16,13; (15) Mt 16,15-16; (16) Mt 16,17; (17) Ac 27-8; (18) Jn 6,67; (19) Jn 6,68; (20) LG 9; (21) Lk 12,32; (22) Jn 20,22; (23) 1Cor 12,13; (24) 1Cor 12,12; (25) 1Cor 1,23; (26) Mk 2,27.