



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO THE BISHOPS OF THE CHINESE EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE
ON THEIR «AD LIMINA» VISIT**

Friday, 8 November 1985

Dear Brothers in Christ,

I welcome you here today in the grace and peace of God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Meetings with my brothers in the Episcopate who come to Rome to visit the tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul and to tell me of the anxieties and expectations of their pastoral ministry are among the most important and gratifying moments of my service as the Successor of Peter.

I wish to share your joys and preoccupations, your difficulties and your earnest hopes, so that I can help you and confirm you in the faith.

1. This meeting is taking place - and it is a great pleasure for me to recall the fact - after the significant hundred and twenty-fifth anniversary of the evangelization of Taiwan and in the midst of the intense preparations for the *National Symposium on Evangelization* which you have wisely planned for 1987. This is a ecclesial event which will produce at every level - of the dioceses, parishes, institutions and families - a deeper appreciation of the word of God and of the teaching of the Council for a more effective evangelization of your compatriots.

2. Yes, as you are well aware, the great Chinese family, so outstanding for its human and cultural values and for its lofty moral traditions, is what I have in mind. You are part of it, and you share its deepest aspirations for authentic progress and prosperity.

You are called upon to be heralds of the message of life, and you do this precisely as Chinese and as men who have had the experience of realizing that to accept the faith in no way implies an abandonment of your own culture and still less a reduction of loyalty and commitment in the

service of your country. On the contrary, faith stimulates believers to make a more human and more qualified contribution. Your communities - and one cannot be unmindful here of the numerous and active communities of the *diaspora* - have the responsibility of giving, as my predecessor Paul VI put it, “a greater common witness to Christ before the world” (PAULI VI *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 77). And I add this: you, precisely *because you are Chinese, are the natural evangelizers of the Chinese family*.

3. The proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of man, can enlighten the human reality from within, for “by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and his love, Christ fully reveals man to man himself” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 22). This proclamation will not be expressed in a timid dialogue or in rigid and overbearing affirmations, but rather in the manner so wisely indicated by the Council: like Christ himself, “so also his disciples, profoundly penetrated by the Spirit of Christ, should know the people among whom they live, and should establish contact with them. They themselves can learn by sincere and patient dialogue what treasures a bountiful God has distributed among the nations of the earth. But at the same time, let them try to illuminate these treasures with the light of the Gospel, to set them free, and to bring them under the dominion of God their Savior” (*Ad gentes*, 11).

In the significant evangelizing commitment which the Catholic community in Taiwan has decided to undertake for the benefit of all their brethren on the Island, first place must be given to this central proclamation linked to the salvation of man, which also requires the authentically human promotion of all the aspects that make up human life.

I know that you are rightly concerned, in this regard, by certain situations connected with ambiguities in the economic progress achieved by your compatriots. For this progress is accompanied by obvious forms of consumerism and practical materialism which have led to a marked weakening of the moral values, and in a number of cases of the traditional and cultural values which are the true soul of your people.

4. Dear Brothers, the Church carefully examines these situations which stimulate her vocation of service and which demand a response that truly reaches the very depth of the human heart in all its genuine needs. While appreciating the lofty cultural traditions of the Chinese family and while following with *courageous discernment* the signs of the times, with great confidence in Christ the Lord the Church must be constantly committed to promoting the dignity of every person and to ensuring respect for and the defense of human life.

You are aware that, in the present social and cultural context, the work of evangelization cannot be satisfied with following only methods of the past, however good they may have been. The Church must also be courageous in devising new methods while remaining ever willing, in not a few cases, to return to activities proper to the first apostolic proclamation.

This new commitment, which you have so opportunity decided upon in communion with your closest collaborators - be they priests, religious or lay people - has become so pressing and urgent as to demand an authentic missionary style.

On the one hand, there is need for fidelity to the word of life as it has been preserved and transmitted in the Church. "To the successors of the Apostles, sacred tradition hands on in its full purity God's word, which was entrusted to the Apostles, by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit. Thus, led by the light of the Spirit of Truth, these successors can in their preaching preserve this word of God faithfully, explain it, and make it more widely known" (*Dei Verbum*, 9).

On the other hand, one must proceed with an apostolate which is vigorously renewed, and this means one that is creative and courageous.

5. In this regard it would be good to give a fresh *impulse to all centers of education and formation*. In these, an ever greater emphasis should be given to the fact that only by taking into account man's spiritual and religious dimension can the avoidance of partial and incomplete definitions of man be ensured. Such definitions lead to development projects that destroy man's soul and his most genuine aspirations.

I am aware of the meritorious cultural activities performed by Fu Jen University, which previously experienced the untiring zeal of the late Cardinal Yü Pin and is now entrusted to the attentive and diligent care of the present Rector, dear Archbishop Stanislaus Lokuang. The Church looks with attentive interest to this *important instrument of the formation of the people of today*: formation of their consciences in good, in a spirit of service, in a sense of discipline, in ethical rectitude in every field of action. All are aspects of a delicate moral sensitivity, already recognized as values by traditional Chinese humanism.

This center of higher studies will be a *special and high level setting for the encounter between the message of salvation in its manifold expressions and lofty Chinese culture*, profiting from the contribution of scholars and experts. This is called for by the sublime nature of the Gospel message, as well as by the dignity and nobility of the traditions and human values proper to Chinese culture.

6. A special role in this important evangelizing mission belongs to the Christian *laity*, who by virtue of their Baptism and Confirmation have a full part to play in the mission of the Church. We must never cease to remind ourselves and them of what Christ the Lord said to his disciples: "You are the light of the world . . . Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (*Matth.* 5, 14-16). It will also be appropriate to return to the enlightening words of the Council inspired by this Gospel text in order to deal with the subject of the apostolate of the laity and of the mission which makes them sharers in the life of the Church and in service to society (Cfr. *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 6).

And if it were ever necessary, my predecessor Pope Paul VI, in his Apostolic Exhortation "[Evangelii Nuntiandi](#)", thus specified the spheres of the apostolate: "The vast and complicated world of politics, society and economics, but also the world of culture, of the sciences and the arts, of international life, of the mass media. It also includes other realities which are open to evangelization, such as human love, the family, the education of children and adolescents, professional work, suffering". And he concluded: "The more Gospel-inspired lay people there are engaged in these realities, clearly involved in them, competent to promote them and conscious that they must exercise to the full their Christian powers which are often buried and suffocated, the more these realities will be at the service of the Kingdom of God and therefore of salvation in Jesus Christ" (PAULI VI [Evangelii Nuntiandi](#), 70).

7. Dear Brothers, this meeting with you, the Bishops of the Chinese Regional Episcopal Conference, cannot but *remind* us of so many *brethren*, united in the same faith, who are called to *bear witness to the Word of life on the great Chinese mainland*.

That Church, so dear to me, is continually in my mind and I daily beseech the Spirit that the day may soon come when, often *the obstacles of various kinds have been removed, there will come the desired moment of communion fully lived, expressed and enjoyed*.

In the meantime, there is entrusted to us the fruitful mission of praying for those communities, that their faith in the Redeemer of humanity may be lively and deeply experienced in the communion of the one, holy, Catholic and apostolic Church, which has in Peter and his Successors the "permanent and visible source and foundation both of the Bishops and of the whole company of the faithful" ([Lumen Gentium](#), 23).

Yes, as you know, it is a question of a bond which joins every local Church with the Pope and with the Catholic communities of all the other countries, and which is essential for the faith of Catholics.

This does not diminish the reality of each local Church but highlights it and gives it added significance for, while it encourages and promotes an ever richer and more mature acceptance of responsibility by the Bishops, priests and laity of each country, it gives the local Churches the opportunity and the joy of co-responsibility in the life of the universal Church.

At the same time, we will ask the Giver of every perfect gift, that the capacity of our brothers and sisters to love, still more purified by trials and suffering, may extend to the demand of the welfare and progress of their country, and that they may make a generous and fitting contribution of competence, commitment, patriotic love and uprightness.

Also for the Chinese brethren who are living in the various countries of the world you certainly beseech from the Lord all prosperity and well-being, and you hope that they will increasingly undertake ever wider cooperation in evangelizing those with whom they share a common origin

and cultural heritage.

8. At the end of last year's meeting I entrusted to you, the Pastors of the Church in Taiwan, the mission of being a living witness of faith for the brethren in Mainland China. I know that the invitation has echoed deeply in your hearts as Bishops and in the communities entrusted to your pastoral care. Let us give thanks to the Lord Jesus, entrusting ourselves still more completely to his guidance in discovering and subsequently carrying out his inscrutable plan.

You are called to be a witness of faith, in the building up of a Church which, being authentically Chinese, is completely devoted to the service of man, of every individual, in the light of the word of God and in communion with the Universal Church, "cum Petro et sub Petro".

May Mary, Mother and Queen of China, accept these desires and your resolutions and obtain from the Father their total fulfilment.

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