



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY
TO THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC,
MEXICO AND THE BAHAMAS

EUCCHARISTIC CELEBRATION

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

Cathedral of Santo Domingo

Friday, 26 January 1979

Beloved Brothers and Sisters,

Blessed be the Lord who has brought me here, to this soil of the Dominican Republic, where fortunately, for the glory and praise of God in this new Continent, there also dawned the day of salvation. I have wished to come to this cathedral of Santo Domingo to be for a moment in your midst, beloved priests, deacons, men and women religious, and seminarians, to manifest to you my special affection for you all, in whom the Pope and the Church put their best hopes, in order that you may feel more joyful in faith, so that your pride in being what you are may overflow because of me (cf. Phil 1:26).

Above all, however, I wish to join you in thanksgiving to God. Thanksgiving for the growth and zeal of this Church which has to its credit so many noble initiatives, and which shows such commitment in service of God and of men. I thank God with immense joy—to use the words of the Apostle Paul —"for your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. And I am sure that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ." (ibid. 1:3 ff.)

I really wish I had time to stay with you, to learn your names, and to hear from your lips "that which overflows from the heart" (cf. Mt 12:34), the marvellous things you have experienced in your soul—"fecit mihi magna qui potens est" (Lk 1:49): for he who is mighty has done great things for

me—having been faithful to the meeting with the Lord. A meeting of preference on his side!

It is precisely this, the paschal meeting with the Lord, which I wish to propose to your reflection, in order to renew your faith and your enthusiasm in this eucharistic celebration; a personal, living meeting—with eyes wide open and a heart beating fast—with the Risen Christ (cf. Lk 24:30), the objective of your love and of your whole life.

It sometimes happens that our harmony of faith with Jesus remains weak or fades—which is at once noticed by the faithful people, who are infected with sadness by it—because, although we bear him within us, it is sometimes in a way that is mingled with our human inclinations and reasonings (cf. *ibid.* 15), without letting all the magnificent light that he contains for us shine forth. On some occasions we may perhaps speak of him from the stand-point of some changing premises or data of a sociological, political, psychological, linguistical character; instead of drawing the basic criteria of our life and our activity from a Gospel lived with integrity, joy, with that immense confidence and hope that the Cross of Christ contains.

One thing is clear, beloved brothers: faith in the Risen Christ is not the result of technical knowledge or the fruit of scientific qualifications (cf. 1 Cor 1:26). What is asked of us is to announce the death of Jesus and to proclaim his resurrection (cf. Liturgy). Jesus is alive. "God raised him up, having loosed the bonds of death" (Acts 2:24.) What was at the beginning a trembling murmur among the first witnesses, soon changed into the joyful experience of real life of those who "ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead" (Acts 10:41 f.). Yes, Christ really lives in the Church; he is in us, bearers of hope and immortality.

So if you have met Christ, live Christ, live with Christ! Proclaim him in the first person, as real witnesses: "To me to live is Christ." (Phil 1:21.) Here, too, is real liberation: to proclaim Jesus free of bonds, present in men, who are transformed, made new creatures. Why is our testimony sometimes vain? Because we present Jesus without the whole attractive power of his Person; without revealing the riches of the sublime ideal that following him involves; because we do not always succeed in showing a conviction, expressed in real life, with regard to the stupendous value of our dedication to the great ecclesial cause that we serve.

Brothers and Sisters: Men must see in us the dispensers of God's mysteries (cf. 1 Cor 4:1), the credible witnesses of his presence in the world. Let us think frequently that God, when he calls us, does not ask for just a part of our person, but he asks us for our whole person and all our vital energies in order to proclaim to men the joy and peace of the new life in Christ, in order to guide them to the meeting with him. Therefore, let our first care be to seek the Lord, and once we have met him, to ascertain where and how he lives, remaining with him the whole day (Jn 1:39). Remaining with him, particularly, in the Eucharist, where Christ gives himself to us; and in prayer, by means of which we give ourselves to him. The Eucharist must be completed and prolonged through prayer, in our everyday affairs as a "sacrifice of praise" (Roman Missal, Eucharistic Prayer

l). In prayer, in familiar intercourse with God our Father, we discern better where is our strength and where is our weakness, because the spirit comes to our help (cf. Rom 8:26). The same Spirit speaks to us and gradually immerses us in the divine mysteries, in the plans of love for men which God carries out by means of our offer in his service.

Like St Paul, during a meeting at Troas to break bread, I, too, would continue to speak to you until midnight (cf. Acts 20:6 ff.). I would have many more things to say but I cannot do so now. In the meantime I urge you to read carefully what I said recently in Rome, to the clergy, to men and women religious, and to seminarians. That will widen this meeting, which will continue spiritually with other similar ones in the next few days. May the Lord and our sweet Mother, the Blessed Virgin, accompany you always and fill your lives with great enthusiasm in the service of your noble ecclesial vocation.

Let us continue with Mass, placing on the table of offerings our desire to live the new life, our necessities and our supplications, the necessities and supplications of the Dominican Church and nation. Let us also put there the work and the fruits of the Third General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate at Puebla.

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