



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO INDONESIA, PAPUA NEW GUINEA,
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(2-13 September 2024)

HOLY MASS

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS

Singapore Sports Hub National Stadium
Thursday, 12 September 2024

[Multimedia]

“Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up” (1 Cor 8:1). Saint Paul addresses these words to the brothers and sisters of the Christian community at Corinth. In his letters to this community, which was rich in many charisms (cf. 1 Cor 1:4-5), the Apostle often recommends that it cultivate communion in charity.

Let us listen to those words of Paul as together we thank the Lord for the Church in Singapore, which is also rich in gifts, a Church that is vibrant, growing and engaged in constructive dialogue with the various other Confessions and Religions with which it shares this wonderful land.

For this reason, then, I would like to reflect on Paul’s words, taking as a starting point the beauty of this city and its great and bold architecture, especially this impressive National Stadium complex, which contribute to making Singapore so famous and fascinating. First, let us remember that, in the end, at the origins of these imposing buildings, as with any other undertaking that leaves a positive mark on our world, while people may think that they are primarily about money, techniques or even engineering ability, which are certainly useful, very useful, what we really find is *love*, precisely the “love that builds up”.

While some may think this is a naive statement, by reflecting on it we see that this is not the case. Indeed, while good works may have brilliant, strong, rich and creative people behind them, there are always fragile women and men, like us, for whom without love there is no life, no impetus, no reason to act, no strength to build.

Dear brothers and sisters, if there is anything good that exists and endures in this world, it is only because, in innumerable situations, love has prevailed over hate, solidarity over indifference, generosity over selfishness. Without this, no one here would have been able to give rise to such a great metropolis, for the architects would not have designed it, the workers would not have worked on it and nothing would have been achieved.

So what we see is a sign, and behind each of the works in front of us there are many stories of love to be discovered: of men and women united with one another in a community, of citizens dedicated to their country, of mothers and fathers concerned for their families, of professionals and workers of all kinds sincerely engaged in their various roles and tasks. It is good for us, then, to learn to read these stories, written on the front of our homes and on the paths of our streets, and to pass on their memory, in order to remind us that nothing lasting is born or grows without love.

Sometimes it happens that the greatness and grandeur of our projects can make us forget this, and fool us into thinking that we can be the sole authors of our lives, of our wealth, our wellbeing, our happiness. Yet, ultimately, life always brings us back to one reality: *without love we are nothing*.

Faith, then, confirms and enlightens us even more deeply regarding this conviction, because it tells us that at the root of our capacity to love and be loved is God himself, who with a Father's heart has willed and desired to bring us into existence in an utterly gratuitous way (cf. *1 Cor 8:6*) and who in an equally gratuitous way has redeemed us and freed us from sin and death, through the death and resurrection of his only Son. It is in Jesus that all that we are and can become have their origin and fulfilment.

Thus, in our love we see a reflection of God's love, as Saint John Paul II said during his visit to this land (cf. *Homily at Holy Mass at the National Stadium, Singapore*, 20 November 1986). He went on to add the important point that, "love is characterized by a deep respect for all people, regardless of their race, belief or whatever makes them different from ourselves" (*ibid.*).

Brothers and sisters, these are important words for us because, beyond the astonishment we feel in front of human works, they remind us that there is an even greater wonder to be embraced with even greater admiration and respect: namely, the brothers and sisters we meet, without discrimination, every day on our path, as we see in Singaporean society and the Church, which are ethnically diverse and yet united and in solidarity!

The most beautiful building, the most precious treasure, the most profitable investment in God's eyes, what is it? It is ourselves, all of us, for we are beloved children of the same Father (cf. *Lk* 6:35), called in turn to spread love. The readings of this Mass speak to us of this in various ways. From different points of view, they describe the same charity, which is gentle in respecting the vulnerability of the weak (cf. *1 Cor* 8:13), provident in knowing and accompanying those who are uncertain on life's journey (cf. *Ps* 138), and generous, kind in forgiving beyond all calculation and measure (cf. *Lk* 6:27-38).

The love that God shows us, and that he invites us to share with others, "responds generously to the needs of the poor... is marked by compassion for those in sorrow... is quick to offer hospitality and is persevering in times of trial. It is always ready to forgive, to hope", to forgive and hope even to the point of returning "a blessing for a curse... love is the very centre of the Gospel" (SAINT JOHN PAUL II, *Homily at Holy Mass at the National Stadium, Singapore*, 20 November 1986).

Indeed, we can see this in a great many of the saints, those men and women who were so conquered by the God of mercy that they became a reflection of that mercy, an echo, a living image. Here, to conclude, I would like to call to mind just two of them.

The first is Mary, whose Most Holy Name we celebrate today. She has given hope to so many people by her support and presence, which she continues to do! On how many lips has her Name appeared, and continues to appear in moments of joy and sorrow! This is because in her, in Mary, we see the Father's love manifested in one of the most beautiful and fulsome of ways, for in her we see the tenderness – let us not forget tenderness! – of a mother, who understands and forgives everything and who never abandons us. This is why we turn to her!

The second is a saint dear to this land, who found hospitality here many times during his missionary journeys. I am speaking of Saint Francis Xavier, who was received in this land on numerous occasions, the last on 21 July 1552.

We still have a beautiful letter that he addressed to Saint Ignatius and his first companions, in which he expresses his desire to go to all the universities of his time in order to cry out "like a madman... [to] those with more learning than charity" so that they might feel compelled to become missionaries for the love of their brothers and sisters, and to "cry out with all their heart: 'Lord, I am here! What do you want me to do?'" (*Letter, Cochin, January 1544*).

We too could make these words our own, following his and Mary's example: "Lord, here I am; what do you want me to do?", so that they may accompany us not only in these days, but always, as a constant commitment to listening and responding readily to the invitations to love and live justly that continue to come to us today from the infinite love of God.

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