



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY
TO THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC,
MEXICO AND THE BAHAMAS

EUCCHARISTIC CELEBRATION

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

The Cathedral of Mexico City

Friday, 26 January 1979

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate and Beloved Sons,

It is only a few hours since with deep emotion I set foot for the first time on this blessed land. And now I have the happiness of this meeting with you, with the Mexican Church and people, on this *day of Mexico* as it wishes to be.

It is a meeting which began with my arrival in this beautiful city; it was extended as I passed through the streets and squares; it was intensified on my entrance into this Cathedral. But it is here, in the celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, that it has its climax.

Let us put this meeting under the protection of the Mother of God, the Virgin of Guadalupe, whom the Mexican people loves with the deepest devotion.

To you bishops of this Church; to you priests, men and women religious, seminarians, members of Secular Institutes, laity of Catholic and apostolic movements; to you children, young people, adults, and the old; to all of you, Mexicans, who have a splendid past of love for Christ, even in the midst of trials; to you who bear in the depths of your heart devotion to the Virgin of Guadalupe, the Pope wishes to speak today about something which is, and must increasingly be an essential Christian and Marian feature of yours: faithfulness to the Church.

Among the many titles bestowed on the Virgin throughout the centuries by the filial love of Christians, there is one that has a very deep meaning: *Virgo Fidelis*, the faithful Virgin. What does this faithfulness of Mary's mean? What are the dimension of this faithfulness?

The first dimension is called *search*. Mary was faithful first of all when she began, lovingly, to seek the deep sense of God's plan in her and for the world. "Quomodo fiet?"—How shall this be?—she asked the Angel of the Annunciation. Already in the Old Testament the meaning of this search is portrayed in an expression of outstanding beauty and extraordinary spiritual content: "To seek the face of the Lord". There will not be faithfulness if it is not rooted in this ardent, patient, and generous search; if there is not in man's heart a question to which only God gives an answer, or rather, to which only God is the answer.

The second dimension of faithfulness is called reception, acceptance. The "quomodo fiet?" is changed, on Mary's lips, to a "fiat". Let it be done, I am ready, I accept: this is the crucial moment of faithfulness, the moment in which man perceives that he will never completely understand the "how"; that there are in God's plan more areas of mystery than of clarity; that, however he may try, he will never succeed in understanding it completely. It is then that man accepts the mystery, gives it a place in his heart, just as "Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart" (Lk 2:19; cf. Lk 3:15). It is the moment when man abandons himself to the mystery, not with the resignation of one who capitulates before an enigma or an absurdity, but rather with the availability of one who opens up to be inhabited by something—by Someone!—greater than his own heart. This acceptance takes place, in short, through faith, which is the adherence of the whole being to the mystery that is revealed.

The third dimension of faithfulness is *consistency*. To live in accordance with what one believes. To adapt one's own life to the object of one's adherence. To accept misunderstandings, persecutions, rather than a break 'between what one practises and what one believes: this is consistency. Here is, perhaps, the deepest core of faithfulness.

But all faithfulness must pass the most exacting test: that of duration. Therefore the fourth dimension of faithfulness is *constancy*. It is easy to be consistent for a day or two. It is difficult and important to be consistent for one's whole life. It is easy to be consistent in the hour of enthusiasm, it is difficult to be so in the hour of tribulation. And only a consistency that lasts throughout the whole of life, can be called faithfulness. Mary's "fiat" in the Annunciation finds its fullness in the silent "fiat" that she repeats at the foot of the Cross. To be faithful means not betraying in the darkness what one has accepted in public.

Of all the teachings that the Virgin gives to her children in Mexico, the most beautiful and the most important one is perhaps this lesson of faithfulness. This faithfulness which the Pope delights in discovering and which he expects from the Mexican people.

It is said of my native country: "Polonia semper fidelis". I want to be able to say also: Mexico "semper fidelis", always faithful!

In fact, the religious history of this nation is a history of faithfulness; faithfulness to the seeds of faith sown by the first missionaries; faithfulness to a simple but deep-rooted religious outlook, sincere to the point of sacrifice; faithfulness to Marian devotion; exemplary faithfulness to the Pope. I did not have to come to Mexico to know this faithfulness to the Vicar of Christ, because I knew it long ago; but I thank the Lord for being able to experience it in the fervour of your welcome.

At this solemn hour I would like to call upon you to strengthen this faithfulness, to make it stauncher. I would like to call you to express it in an intelligent and strong faithfulness to the Church today. And what will be the dimensions of this faithfulness if not the same as those of Mary's faithfulness?

The Pope who visits you, expects from you a generous and noble effort to know the Church better and better. The Second Vatican Council wished to be, above all, a Council on the Church. Take in your hands the documents of the Council, especially "[Lumen Gentium](#)", study them with loving attention, with the spirit of prayer, to discover what the Spirit wished to say about the Church. In this way you will be able to realize that there is not—as some people claim—a "new church", different or opposed to the "old church", but that the Council wished to reveal more clearly the one Church of Jesus Christ, with new aspects, but still the same in its essence.

The Pope expects from you, moreover, loyal acceptance of the Church. To remain attached to incidental aspects of the Church, valid in the past but outdated today, would not be faithful in this sense. Nor would it be faithful to embark, in the name of an unenlightened prophetism, on the adventurous and utopian construction of a so-called Church of the future, disembodied from the present one. We must remain faithful to the Church which, born once and for all from God's plan, from the Cross, from the open sepulchre of the Risen Christ and from the grace of Pentecost, is born again every day, not from the people or from other rational categories, but from the same sources as those from which it was born originally. It is born today to construct with all the nations a people desirous of growing in faith, hope and brotherly love.

Likewise the Pope expects of you that your lives should be consistent with your membership of the Church. This consistency means being aware of one's identity as a Catholic and manifesting it, with complete respect, but also without wavering or fear. The Church today needs Christians ready to bear witness clearly to their condition, and who will play their part in the mission of the Church in the world, in all social environments, as a ferment of religiousness, justice, advancement of human dignity; trying to give the world an increase of spirit so that it may be a more human and brotherly world, looking towards God.

At the same time, the Pope hopes that your consistency will not be short-lived, but constant and persevering. To belong to the Church, to live in the Church, to be the Church, is something very demanding today. Sometimes it does not cost clear and direct persecution, but it may cost contempt, indifference, under-privilege. The danger of fear, weariness, and insecurity is, therefore, easy and frequent. Do not let yourselves be overcome by these temptations. Do not allow to vanish, as a result of any of these sentiments, the strength and the spiritual energy of your "being the Church". This is a grace which we must ask for, which we must be ready to receive with great inner poverty, and which we must begin to live every morning: and every day with greater fervour and intensity.

Dear Brothers and Sons: at this Eucharist which seals a meeting of the Servants of God with the soul and conscience of the Mexican people, the new Pope would like to gather from your lips, from your hands, and from your lives, a solemn commitment, in order to offer it to the Lord. The commitment of consecrated souls, of children, young people, adults, and the old; of cultured people and simple people, of men and women, of all: the commitment of faithfulness to Christ, to the Church of today. Let us put this intention and this commitment on the altar.

May the faithful Virgin, the Mother of Guadalupe, from whom we learn to know God's plan, his promise and his covenant, help us with her intercession to strengthen this commitment and to carry it out until the end of our lives, until the day when the voice of the Lord will say to us: "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter into the joy of your master." (Mt 25:21-23.)

Amen.

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