



The Holy See

MASS FOR A GROUP OF IRISH PILGRIMS

HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II

28 May 1980

Dear Brothers and Sisters from Long Tower Parish,

1. I know that for a long time you have looked forward to your visit to Rome. You have kept your goal constantly in mind; you have made plans well in advance; you have prepared yourselves spiritually for this pilgrimage of faith. And now your hopes and plans have become a reality, and this reality brings joy to your hearts and also to mine.

Moreover, this present: moment is the highlight of your journey, because we are celebrating together the Eucharistic Sacrifice, which is - as the Second Vatican Council reminds us - "the source and summit of all Christian life" .

2. You have come with your joys and your sorrows, carrying in your hearts, your intentions and those of your loved ones. You have come to invoke the intercession of the holy Apostles of Rome, Peter and Paul, who from the walls of this chapel direct your gaze to the Lord. Above all, you have come to seek Jesus Christ at the centre of his Church, and to renew your trust in him. It is as though you heard and obeyed the words of the inspired author urging you to go to Christ: "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace in time of need" .

3. And today your whole expectation has yielded to fulfillment.. You have drawn near to Christ and he has united you in his Eucharistic worship of the Father. He gives you his grace and mercy, his love and peace.

4. The sense of expectation that preceded your visit during these months, even years, since you

first made your plans is the symbol of another expectation - an expectation that is part of Christian living. The prayer in the Mass speaks about this when it says that "we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Saviour Jesus Christ".

The coming of our Saviour Jesus Christ in glory is the great future event that gives a whole new dimension to our lives. We are citizens of an earthly city, where toil and pain, where work and striving, are part of the fabric of our existence. God wills our temporal condition as much as he wills our future destiny, but it is precisely in the light of the future that everything in the present falls into perspective. In other words, the fullness of reality will be revealed only when Christ comes again to take us to himself - all of us who have been redeemed by his precious blood, "the precious blood of a lamb without spot or stain" . His coming for each of us at a moment known only to the Father, and his final coming in glory, give a new dimension to our outlook on life.

5. It is part of our temporal responsibility to work for the advancement of God's Kingdom on earth, to promote the dignity of every human being, to combat violence, to spread understanding and compassion, and to build the edifice of peace on the secure foundation of justice and love. Like the Son of man, we are here "not to be served, but to serve" . In doing this we find great joy and happiness, and yet we know that "Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor has it so much as dawned on man what God has prepared for those who love him" .

6. The element of expectation is then part of our Christian vocation. It corresponds to God's plan. Awaiting our Saviour Jesus Christ, far from giving us an excuse for inactivity or lack of sensitivity to the needs of the world, encourages us to "live temperately, justly and devoutly in this age" .

Dearly beloved: this is the witness that we must give to the world: to show by our actions that we really do believe that "Christ will come again". In this expectation we discover the immense value of our efforts at Christian living. In this expectation we find deep joy for our lives.

And on your return home, I would ask you to take my message to all the members of your parish, to all the people of the Diocese of Derry. Tell everyone that the Pope asks you to live in joyful hope, in the firm conviction of the coming of "our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ" . Tell them all that the Pope thanks them for their deep fidelity to Christ and to His Vicar on earth. To you here present and to all your dear ones at home with all my heart I impart my Apostolic Blessing.

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