



The Holy See

HOLY MASS FOR THE STUDENTS OF THE PHILIPPINE COLLEGE

HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II

Saturday, 30 January 1982

*Your Eminences,
my brother Bishops, dearly beloved,*

My message today is above all directed to the priests who make up the student body of this Philippine College here in Rome. It is especially for you, my brother priests that I have come. At the same time I am thinking of all the Filipino people, with cherished memories of my visit to your country, memories which, in union with Christ, I offer to the Father in this Eucharistic sacrifice.

1. This afternoon Jesus is gathering us together as his disciples. We are celebrating our union with him. We are celebrating Christ's union with his Church, a covenant of love that is signified in the sacrament of marriage. And like the marriage feasts of Cana our own celebration today is complete: in discipleship we have assembled with Jesus, to be strengthened by his company, to enter more deeply into his friendship and to share his Paschal Supper. At the same time we know that the Mother of Jesus is here. We feel at peace; we feel secure for the journey that awaits us in life. For we are gathered under the patronage of Mary, Nuestra Señora de la Paz y Buen Viaje, to whom this College is dedicated.

2. Today's event evokes the whole reality of the religious history of the Filipino people. Young men are sent by their Bishops to this College so that they may be prepared to enter into a centuries-old tradition of fidelity and evangelisation. Here young men come in order to be enlisted and equipped in the cause of the Gospel. As John XXIII pointed out at the time that this College was inaugurated, the very institution is also a special link between the Philippines and the See of Peter.

Here, by the grace of God, the ideals of the priesthood are to be lived by individual priests who are

supported by a community which corporately embraces and promotes the same ideals. From here these ideals are to be transmitted to seminaries and parishes throughout the Philippines. Here young priests can reflect deeply on what it means to be sent to proclaim the Gospel of salvation. What a great hope therefore is held out by this institution to the Filipino people; it represents their hope and prayer and plea to have priests according to the Heart of Jesus Christ.

In my talk to the priests and seminarians in Cebu, I said how much the Church needs her priests. And today I would add how much the Philippine College can do to help priests to fulfil their mission and thus meet the needs of the Church. Here you have the opportunity to form, through the Eucharist, a true community which expresses itself in prayer, charity and zeal. As you prepare to become ministers of reconciliation for the people of God, authentic heralds of deep interior conversion, you have the wonderful opportunity to learn, through personal use, to love the Sacrament of Penance and to give it the very high priority that it is meant to have in the Church today. In your community you also have the opportunity to look to the future, reflecting, in the light of God's word, on the ecclesial situation that awaits you in your respective dioceses. In prayer and meditation and through your dedicated study, the Lord will speak to you and inflame your hearts with zeal for the well-being of the Filipino people. You will begin to realize more and more how urgent the cause of evangelisation is, how much the Church needs you, how much Christ needs you – because he has willed to need you – in order to continue his salvific mission.

But at the same time you will see that there are conditions for a truly effective priesthood, for a truly effective collaboration with Christ the High Priest.

3. In Cebu I spoke of three of these conditions. There is above all the need for intimacy with Jesus-Christ – the kind of intimate union to which Christ called his Apostles. They were his closest friends, the companions he chose personally, the ones with whom he shared his thoughts, and to whom he finally entrusted the mission which he had received from his Father. A second condition for an effective priesthood is the absolute need for unity with the Bishop, in the fraternity of the presbyterium. Jesus wills that our visible unity in the priesthood should reflect the source of his own inner dynamism: his union with the Father. From earliest times the Fathers of the Church proclaim this truth with eloquence and insistence. The third condition for a fruitful service to God's people is the total gift of our being to Christ. In giving ourselves entirely to him – through the gift we make of our celibacy – we receive as a gift from Christ the power to love more deeply all those who make up the "whole Christ". In calling us to the priesthood, Jesus calls us to generous and sacrificial love.

4. By reason of our very Baptism in Christ, we are called by the Father to holiness, as Saint Paul reminds us in the reading this afternoon: "Before the world was made, he chose us, chose us in Christ, to be holy and spotless, and to live through love". These words take on new intensity for us here. To live as adopted sons means even more to us when we reflect that we are identified with Jesus, the only Son, in his role as High Priest, constituted as such at the moment of his

Incarnation in the womb of the Virgin Mary. Mary presides over the destiny of this College, just as she has presided for century over evangelisation in the Philippines. She is close to all those who share the priesthood of her Son. In today's Gospel account she breaks the silence that generally surrounds her in order to give these words of counsel: "Do whatever he tells you". The Gospel relates how in fidelity to Mary's suggestion and in obedience to Christ's words there were undreamt of results.

Jesus performed the "first sign" of his Gospel ministry.

Today Mary is still saying: "Do whatever he tells you". And through fidelity to her and in obedience to Jesus, we are sure that we shall continue to have results. We believe that Jesus will perform other "signs" of his power and love, to meet the needs of his Church, in spite of the inadequacies of his servants.

5. If we listen attentively, we know that Jesus is telling us to prepare for our mission of evangelisation, so that we can go forth preaching a Gospel of salvation, announcing the Good News that is for all the people, proclaiming, in the very words of Jesus: "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him". If we listen to Mary and if we obey Jesus we know that our ministry of evangelisation will be blessed. For this reason we are convinced that this is a day of hope for this College and for its students and staff. With God's help this institution will truly fulfil its providential role at the service of continuing evangelisation throughout the Philippines. It is a day of hope for all Asia, with the light of Christ shining from the Philippines.

6. Dear brothers, always remember that the Mother of Jesus is here; she is with us today, and she will continue to be with you in your preparation for your future mission at home. She will accompany you on your journey of evangelisation throughout your land. Act on her words: listen to Jesus as he invites you to great intimacy with himself, union with your Bishops and renewed dedication to generous and faithful celibate love in the service of evangelisation. It will always be so.

Wherever you are, you can say: the Mother of Jesus is here!

