



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO KOREA, PAPUA NEW GUINEA,

SOLOMON ISLANDS AND THAILAND

(MAY 2-11, 1984) MASS IN HONOUR OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY HOMILY OF POPE JOHN PAUL

// Honiara (Solomon Islands)

Wednesday, 9 May 1984 Dear Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ, "When the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman" (Gal. 4, 4).1. Today's first reading speaks of the fullness of time. This refers to the fulfilment of the history of humanity in the eternal plan of the Most Holy Trinity. The Letter to the Galatians tells us about this plan and what its fulfilment consists in. First, God's own Son comes into the world to make it possible for us to be adopted as God's children; we are no longer slaves but children. Secondly, in the power of the Holy Spirit that God has sent into our hearts, we can cry out, "Abba! Father!". We can call God our Father. And finally, together with the only-begotten Son of God we too become his children and heirs. When the time had fully come, all people were given the possibility of sharing intimately in the life of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.2. The proclamation of this "fullness of time" is called evangelization; it is the handing on of the Good News of Salvation. And for nearly a century and a half, this fullness of time has been proclaimed here in Solomon Islands. Although the Spanish, accompanied by Franciscan missionaries, came to Point Cruz in 1568, the history of evangelization did not really begin until 1845. The first missionaries to be sent were Marists under the leadership of Bishop Epalle. Despite their zeal and courage, the mission had to be abandoned two years later, but not before Bishop Epalle and several others had given their lives for the faith. The next major programme of evangelization was carried out by Anglican missionaries coming from New Zealand. By their sustained efforts to preach the Gospel and to set up Christian schools, the message of Christ began to take root in the hearts of the people. Various missionary endeavours followed not long after, including those made by members of the South Seas Evangelical Mission, the Methodist Church, the Seventh Day Adventists and others. All of these sought not only to make Christ better known but also to work for the health and education of the people. The Catholic Church renewed her missionary efforts here at the very end of the nineteenth century. Once again it was the Marists who took up the work, and in 1904 they were joined by the Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary, who quickly established convents at all the mission stations. The work of evangelization in Solomon Islands has been greatly assisted by the untiring and very capable leadership of the Bishops who have been appointed to serve here. Bishop Bertreux, the first Vicar Apostolic in the "South Solomons", was chosen to oversee the early expansion of the missionary efforts and made the first attempts at training local catechists and lay leaders. His successor, Bishop Raucaz, carried on this work with no less fervour. Among other achievements, he encouraged the founding of the first local Congregation of women religious, the Daughters of Mary Immaculate. Bishop Aubin, who succeeded Bishop Raucaz, witnessed the tragic suffering and devastation caused by World War II. During this time most missionaries were either killed or forced to withdraw. After the war, however, with the help of many new missionaries, the Bishop supervised the rapid growth of the Church in the

territory. He directed the establishment of various institutions, including a number of Catholic schools and, in particular, the first central school, which was placed under the direction of Marist Teaching Brothers. In 1958 Bishop Stuyvenberg succeeded Bishop Aubin, and he has worked until the present time to carry on the task of evangelization. During this time, the Dominicans, both men and women, have accepted the missionary work of the Western Solomons under the pastoral leadership of Bishop Crowford. Native vocations have begun to appear, and the training of catechists and lay leaders has been greatly aided with the opening of the Apostolic Centre near Honiara. Through all of this, one can clearly see *God's providence* fulfilling his eternal plan of salvation.³ In today's Gospel, we hear the words with which Elizabeth greeted the Mother of our Saviour at the time of the Visitation: "Blessed is *she who believed* that there would be fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord" (*Luc. 1, 45*). I wish to repeat these words to all those in Solomon Islands *who have accepted Christ through faith*: "Blessed are they who have believed". From this faith has been born a new community of the People of God, the Church. Of its nature this community is visible; it is based on the word of God and *lives by the Sacraments*. One enters the community of the Church through the life-giving waters of *Baptism*, which puts an end to sin and brings the gift of grace and communion with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In the Sacrament of *Confirmation*, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit who is given to us in abundance as God's gift. He comes to enkindle in us a more zealous love of God and neighbour, and to strengthen us for the faithful daily living of our faith. The Eucharist is the source and centre of all our Christian life. In the *Eucharistic* celebration, we share in the Sacrifice of the Cross which brought about the Redemption of the world. And it is to the Eucharistic Sacrifice that all the many activities of the Church are directed, so that ever greater glory and praise may be given to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.⁴ The Church in Solomon Islands, which lives in communion with the Catholic Church throughout the world, is flourishing. Your zealous missionaries continue to work hand-in-hand with the indigenous peoples of this country. You are endowed with *clergy and religious* who, through lives of special dedication and service, seek to build up the community of believers in faith, hope and charity. I am pleased that among them are to be found an increasing number of native-born priests, brothers and sisters, and I pray that priestly and religious vocations will flourish abundantly. The *lay* people, too, play an irreplaceable role in the Church's life and mission. I wish to offer a particular word of commendation to your catechists who help to hand on the message of salvation and to your Christian families which are so important for a sound and dynamic Christian community. The entire apostolic *life of the Church is directed towards reconciliation: the reconciliation* of man with God, and the reconciliation of people with one another. For this reason the Sacrament of Penance is vitally important, because in this intimate encounter with Jesus Christ, who is our forgiving Lord, our sins are forgiven and we are once again united with God. Penance also helps us to overcome the barriers which divide people from one another, and to build up a society of harmony and peace. With infinite love for those who are ill, the Lord renews his gift of reconciliation also in the Sacrament *of the Anointing of the Sick*. To husbands and wives Christ has given the Sacrament of *Marriage*. By this great Sacrament, Christian couples are made one in Christ and receive the grace to live in lifelong love and fidelity, and to bring up their children in a reconciled and loving home. The *Sacrament of Holy Orders*, too, serves the cause of reconciliation, for, as deacons, priests and Bishops strive to give a shepherd's care to those entrusted to them, they break down walls of ignorance and sin and strengthen the unity of the local Church.⁵ For all the work of evangelization and reconciliation which has taken place in Solomon Islands, the Bishop of Rome wishes today to sing with you *the song of thanksgiving* which came from the lips of the Mother of God when the "fullness of time" was accomplished in her. *In union with the Virgin Mary*, we magnify you, O Lord, and our souls rejoice in God our Saviour, for you have looked with kindness upon the humble beginning of the missionary efforts in Solomon Islands. You who are mighty have done great things for those who dwell here, and holy is your name. Your mercy is on those who fear you, from generation to generation. Even when this country was devastated by the horrors of the Second World War, you

did not abandon them, but you showed the strength of your arm, exalted the lowly, and filled the hungry with good things. You made the Church flourish again in Solomon Islands, for you have remembered your mercy and continued to pour it out upon generation after generation. On merciful God, your eternal plan of salvation is one of justice and love. You send your Holy Spirit into our hearts that we may cry out "Abba! Father!". For all your works we give you thanks. In the company of Mary and all the Saints, we sing your praises. We bless your name for ever, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Je sais qu'en ces Iles Salomon sont présents aujourd'hui de nombreux fidèles de langue française, venus de plusieurs îles du Pacifique, en particulier du diocèse de Nouméa. Je les remercie de leur visite et je les salue avec joie. Chers Frères et Soeurs, au-delà de la diversité des races, des intérêts et des tensions qui peuvent surgir, vous avez été appelés à partager le même don du Seigneur, en accueillant l'Évangile et en recevant le baptême. Vous avez été incorporés au même Christ, mort et ressuscité pour nous tous. Vous avez reçu le même Esprit Saint, l'Esprit de sainteté et d'amour. Et cet Esprit, qui demeure en vous, vous incite à entrer dans une relation toujours plus vivante avec Dieu, par la prière, à avoir faim et soif de la justice, à construire des communautés humaines et chrétiennes où règnent, de façon inséparable, l'équité, la paix, l'amour fraternel. Tel est le témoignage que vous compatriotes attendent des chrétiens authentiques. Vous contribuerez à sauvegarder le respect des cultures, les droits des personnes et aussi le bien commun de chaque pays. Demeurez unis autour de vos Evêques. Et comprenez que, malgré votre grande dispersion en ce vaste Océan, vous êtes unis dans l'Église universelle ou le Successeur de Pierre a la mission de confirmer ses Frères dans la foi et de les rassembler autour de l'Unique Pasteur, le Seigneur Jésus-Christ. En son nom, je vous bénis de grand coeur, vous et tous ceux que vous

représentez.

Act of entrustment to Mary On this day as we gather in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary, let us turn to her with love and confidence: O holy Mother of God, I, John Paul II, entrust to you *the sons and daughters of the Church* in Solomon Islands. They are the brothers and sisters of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who have been redeemed by the merits of his Precious Blood and evangelized by his grace. O loving Mother of our Saviour, I entrust to you the *families*, the mothers and fathers and children of this land, and especially the sick, the suffering and the aged. Intercede for them with your Son, the source of all life. O Mary, Queen of Peace, I entrust to you *this nation* of Solomon Islands and all the men and women dwelling here. I ask you to assist them in their problems and to sustain them in their hopes. Be for all of them a Mother of Perpetual Help. Offer them all to the Father, imploring his merciful kindness and the gifts of unity and peace, through Jesus, the Eternal Word who became your Son. Obtain eternal rest for their beloved dead and for all those who died in battle on their soil during the Second World War. O Mary, Virgin and Mother, ask the Holy Spirit to bring to completion in the hearts of the Solomon Islanders the work that was begun through the preaching of the word of Jesus, to whom be glory and praise, with the Father and the same Holy Spirit, now and for ever. Amen. © Copyright 1984 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana