



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE BISHOPS FROM PAKISTAN ON THEIR "AD LIMINA" VISIT

Monday, 18 June 1979

Dear Brothers in our Lord Jesus, IN WELCOMING THIS MORNING, I wish to greet the entire Church in Pakistan. With the Apostle Peter I say: "Peace to all of you who are in Christ"[1]. The thoughts of my heart go to the communities of the faithful throughout the Dioceses of your country: to the priests, who in union with yourselves build up the local Churches through the Eucharistic Sacrifice and the word of God; to the religious, who through their ecclesial consecration to Jesus Christ give a special witness of hope to the destiny of all the children of God; to the seminarians, being trained to transmit the word of God to the future generations; and to all the laity, who are called to share intimately in the Church's mission of evangelization, and who through their daily lives build up the Kingdom of God. I am close to all of you in the love of the Saviour – close to you in all your efforts to proclaim "the unsearchable riches of Christ"[2]. At the same time, as Pastor of the universal Church, I can – and do – assure you and your people of the solidarity of all your brethren throughout the world. And I believe that in this solidarity you will find fresh vigour and strength to continue your joyful commitment to the cause of the Gospel. The communion of faith and love that we enjoy – this unity that is effected in us by the Holy Spirit – this is indeed a great gift of God. Today at the tomb of Peter and together with his Successor, may you rededicate yourselves and your local Churches to all the exigencies of this Catholic unity. From this centre may you take back to your people a message of hope and encouragement, so that they may continue to hold fast to the very core of Catholic life, so that like the faithful of the early Church they may persevere in devoting themselves "to the apostles' teaching, and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers"[3]. I am sure that at times, as Bishops, you feel acutely the weight to the charge laid on you by the Lord. Especially because of your zeal, you experience deeply within your hearts the limitations and obstacles that hinder you in the exercise of your pastoral mission. But the success of our ministry is not measured by human standards; it is measured rather by our love and by our fidelity to the word of God. Christ has told us to go forth in the strength of his Spirit – and he assures us that he is with us until the end of time[4]. It is with "the word of truth and the power of God" [5] that we humbly but confidently present ourselves before the world, to fulfil the task entrusted to us by the Lord. I wish to express my admiration for the faith of your people and for the sustained effort and joyful constancy with which your local Churches pledge their fidelity to Christ. At the same time I wish to add a word about one particular aspect of your witness to Christ. In the "Acts of the Apostles", Jesus is presented to us in his activity: "He went about doing good..."[6]. And this same activity is carried on in Pakistan, in Christ's members, in your people. The motivation is the love of Christ, the love of his Father, the love of his brethren. Through a whole network of generous

endeavours – especially in the areas of charitable assistance, health and schools – the Lord Jesus continues to do good; he continues to show his love. The mystery of the Church as the extension of Christ goes on. The charism of the Good Shepherd is thus exercised among your people. God’s love is from generation to generation, and it is ever newly manifested. I believe that a consideration of this important aspect of the Church as a divine mystery is extremely beneficial in sustaining you and renewing you in your pastoral zeal. Your people too will find joy in reflecting on the fact that as an ecclesial community they continue among their own flesh and blood the loving activity of Jesus Christ the Son of God. In reflecting on the greatness of this mission, all obstacles seem secondary. There may be fleeting moments of discouragement, but the power of the Paschal Mystery does not admit defeat. Our role then, dear brother Bishops, is to continue to demonstrate the love of Christ and to proclaim his saving Gospel of redemption with all our energy. The rest is in the hands of God. In pursuing our apostolate, the word of God is the joy of our ministry. It is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path^[7]. It is by guarding and meditating on the word of God that we are enabled to fulfil our mission of charity. By proclaiming to our people the unadulterated word of God in all its richness, we equip them for the vocation of Christian living, Christian service and Christian witness that is theirs. Dear Brothers in the Episcopate, in our special unity today do we not feel supported by the power of the Lord Jesus? Do we not sense his presence? Do we not hear him telling us to continue, courageously and joyfully, in communion with the Catholic Church throughout the world, to proclaim his love and to spread his truth? I ask Blessed Mother Mary to assist you all in the service of her Son, to form you ever more perfectly in his likeness, so that your witness to him may render great honour and glory to the Most Holy Trinity. And with my greetings and my prayers, I send my Apostolic Blessing to all who make up the community of the faithful in your land. My special encouragement goes also to the catechists and to the Christian families, to the youth and to those who suffer and work and pray – so that the world may see the face of Jesus in our

midst.

[1] 1 Petr. 5, 12. [2] Eph. 3, 8. [3] Act. 2, 42. [4] Cfr. Matth. 28, 20. [5] 2 Cor. 6, 7. [6] Act. 10, 38. [7] Cfr. Ps. 119, 105.