



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO PAKISTAN, PHILIPPINES I, GUAM (UNITED STATES OF AMERICA II), JAPAN, ANCHORAGE (UNITED STATES OF AMERICA II)
(FEBRUARY 16-27, 1981)

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II TO THE
THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS ACCREDITED TO THE PHILIPPINES***

Manila

Wednesday, 18 February 1981

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I have come to this part of the world to meet the Catholic communities of the Philippines and Japan, and to present to both nations the expression of the profound esteem in which the Church holds them. At the same time I am also very pleased to have the opportunity to be with you this evening, since, as diplomats accredited to the Government of this land, you represent peoples not only in Asia but throughout the whole world. Later in my program, I shall address myself directly to the Asian peoples ; but I cannot let the present occasion pass without expressing here before you the joy I experience in being able, through you, to greet the peoples and the Governments of your nations, many of whom maintain most cordial relations with the Holy See.

I wish to reiterate the deep esteem which the Catholic Church has for the noble cultural and religious traditions of all peoples, and to reaffirm her desire to be of service to all in *the common pursuit of peace, justice and human advancement*.

2. The Church has no political ambitions. When she offers her own specific contribution to the great permanent tasks of mankind—peace, justice, development and every worthy effort aimed at promoting and defending human dignity—she does so because she is convinced that such *action is related to her mission*.

This mission is concerned with the salvation of man : the whole human being, the individual person who fulfills his or her eternal vocation in temporal history, within a complex of communities and societies. When giving attention to individuals' and peoples' needs and aspirations, the Church follows the command of her Founder ; she implements the solicitude of Christ for each and every person, especially for the poor and for those who are suffering. Her own contribution to the humanization of society and the world derives from Jesus Christ and his Gospel. Through her social teaching, the Church does not present prefabricated models, nor does she align herself with prevailing and passing practices. Rather, with reference to Jesus Christ she strives to bring about a transformation of hearts and minds so that man can see himself in the full truth of his humanity.

3. The Church's action therefore is not political, or economic, or technical. The Church is not competent in the fields of technology or science, nor does she assert herself through power politics. *Her competence, like her mission, is religious and moral in nature*; and she must remain within her proper field of competence, lest her action be ineffective or irresponsible. It is the Church's practice therefore to respect the specific area of responsibility of the State, without interfering in the tasks of the politicians and without participating directly in the management of temporal affairs.

At the same time the Church encourages her members to assume their full responsibility as citizens of a given nation and to seek together with their fellow human beings the paths and models which can best promote the progress of society. She sees as her specific contribution the strengthening of the spiritual and moral bases of society, and as a service to humanity she assists people in forming their consciences correctly.

4. It is in this sense that I wish my journey through Asia to be *a call for peace and for human progress*, and an encouragement for all those who are engaged in protecting and promoting the dignity of all human beings. I also hope that my meeting with you this evening will reinforce your own sense of mission in the service of your countries and of the whole human family. For is it not the mission of a diplomat to be a builder of bridges between nations, to be a specialist in dialogue and understanding, to be a defender of the dignity of man, so that the common welfare of all may be promoted?

Beyond the fostering of legitimate interests of your own nation, your mission directs you in a special way to *the wider concerns of the whole human family*, particularly on this Asian continent. Inspired as you are by the noblest ideals of brotherhood, you will, I am sure, share my concern for peace and progress in this area, and you will understand the need to face the deeper causes of the problems that plague nations and peoples.

In my recent [Encyclical on the Mercy of God](#) I have indicated what I believe to be the " sources of uneasiness". I have cited the fear connected with the prospect of a conflict that, in view of the stockpiling of atomic weapons, could mean the partial self-destruction of humanity. I have drawn

attention to what human beings can do to other human beings through the means provided by an ever more sophisticated military technology.

But I have also drawn attention to other elements when I wrote: " Sian rightly fears falling victim to an oppression that will deprive him of his interior freedom, of the possibility of expressing the truth of which he is convinced, of the faith that he professes, of the ability to obey the voice of conscience that tells him the right path to follow. The technical means at the disposal of modern society conceal within themselves not only the possibility of destruction through military conflict, but also the possibility of a peaceful subjugation of individuals, of environments, of entire societies and of nations, that for one reason or another might prove inconvenient for those who possess the necessary means and are ready to use them without scruple"[1].

I have mentioned the tragic problem of the many who suffer from hunger and malnutrition and of the increasing state of inequality between individuals and nations whereby "side by side with those who are wealthy and living in plenty there exist those who are living in want, suffering, misery and often actually dying of hunger"[2].

5. But in that same document, I also stated (and I would like to leave this thought with you for your reflection) : " The experience of the past and of our own time demonstrates that justice alone is not enough, that it can even lead to the negation and destruction of itself, if that deeper power, which is love, is not allowed to shape human life in its various dimensions"[3].

Yes, dear friends, my message to you this evening concerns this same power of love. A love that is deeply felt and effectively expressed in concrete actions, individual as well as collective, is indeed the moving force that enables man to be true to himself. *Only love can make peoples really responsive to the call of the needy.* And may it be this same force—fraternal love—that impels you to ever higher peaks of service and solidarity. Ladies and gentlemen, in the lofty diplomatic mission that is yours be assured of my total support.

[1] No. 11.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] No.12.

*AAS 73 (1981), p. 350-352.

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