



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO KOREA, PAPUA NEW GUINEA,
SOLOMON ISLANDS AND THAILAND **ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II**
TO CLERGY, RELIGIOUS PEOPLE AND LAITY *Cathedral of Bangkok (Thailand)*
Friday, 11 May 1984

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

grace, mercy and peace be with you from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father's Son, in truth and love (Cf. *2 Jo.* 1, 3).

I have been greatly looking forward to this meeting with you priests, religious and lay men and women. I have been eager to greet you who have such an important role in *the evangelization and ecclesial life of Thailand*. So very often, from the See of Peter, the Prince of Apostles, whose tomb is preserved under the main altar of the Vatican Basilica, my thoughts have reached out to you: "I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers" (*Eph.* 1, 16).

In the context of the pastoral motives of my brief visit to your country, *I give special importance to this meeting*. You, in fact, have been entrusted, according to your different roles, with the task of *shepherding Christ's flock* in union with the Bishops, and of offering a clear and unambiguous *testimony of Christian life* that will nourish the People of God and speak to the hearts and consciences of all men and women of good will.

1. "I do not cease to give thanks for you": in the first place, for the *numerous vocations* to the priesthood which the Father has raised up in the Church in Thailand. I also give thanks for the vitality of the many religious Congregations that bear witness to the fruitful charisms that the Spirit of Christ has poured out on the Church in this land. I thank God for the fortitude and perseverance of the laity in their Christian lives. And I thank all of you, and your brothers and sisters who have not been able to be present here today, for the generous and faithful response which you have given - either as priests, religious or laity - to the call received from God. I pray that I may fulfil Peter's task to confirm you in the faith: that you may live by faith in the Son of God who loved you and gave himself for you (Cf. *Gal.* 2, 20) that you may be faithful to your calling and never lose

sight of the great privilege that is yours: to collaborate in communicating Christ to the world and to build his Kingdom of holiness, justice and love.

As you are well aware, the privilege of a Christian vocation demands a *full response*. It requires every day a confirmation of your original "yes" to the invitation of Christ. It requires a renewal of your baptismal commitment, a renewal of your religious consecration and the promises of your priesthood. May your joy be to follow to the end the road on which you have embarked in following Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Saviour of the world.

2. I am aware of the many and varied ways in which you carry out your service to God's people. Among your activities, however, there is a difference that corresponds to your specific vocation.

First I wish to say a word to you, the priests. In a special way, you must heed the teaching of the Acts of the Apostles. The first disciples considered their principal task to be their devotion "to prayer and to the ministry of the word" (*Act. 6, 4*). You are privileged to have daily contact with Christ through *personal and liturgical prayer*. It is especially in the faith-filled celebration of the sacraments - chief among them the Eucharistic Sacrifice, which is "the source and summit of the whole Christian life" (*Lumen Gentium, 11*)- that you will draw joy and strength. In prayerful meditation on the revealed *word of God*, you will find "constant and familiar companionship with the Father" (*Optatam Totius, 8*), through his Son, Jesus Christ. In this way you will become better instruments of the power of the Holy Spirit to build up God's people into a holy dwelling-place for God: "For we are God's fellow workers" (*1 Cor. 3, 9*).

3. Your service to the word includes the task of adequately *catechizing* your Christian communities so that they may live their faith in a mature and responsible way. This requires that you make time available for study and that you strive constantly to follow the injunction of the First Letter of Peter: "Be always prepared to make a defence to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, with gentleness and reverence" (*1 Petr. 3, 15*). Nor can you overlook your task to present appropriately the first *proclamation of the Christian message* to those who have not yet been comforted by the Gospel of Christ.

The communication of the Good News must be accompanied by *the example of a life* that finds its inspiration in Jesus himself. Allow me, dear priests, to say to you what Saint Paul wrote to the Philippians: "Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you stand firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel" (*Phil. 1, 27*). I assure you that this is my daily prayer for you!

4. The duty of being living examples of the Christian life belongs, too, in a specific way, to the religious of the Church. Dear religious: in you who have been consecrated to the Lord, the believers and unbelievers of this world expect to see that special love that Christ taught as his

"new" commandment: "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jo. 13, 35). *The charity of Christ*, the pillar and support of your life in community and the power of your apostolic activities, will be the most effective proclamation of the truth of the Gospel, giving inner strength and vitality to the Church in Thailand. I wish to assure you of my affection, and to tell you how confidently I place my hopes in you!

5. In the communion that is the Church, the laity have their own specific and indispensable part to play. And to you, dear lay people, I say: by reason of your baptismal incorporation into Christ you share actively, and in a manner all your own, in the responsibility of *transforming the world* according to the truth and values of the Gospel. It is your task to live in such a way that your Christian faith will overflow into the social, cultural, professional and everyday human activities in which you are engaged.

The Church in Thailand needs your active collaboration very much! The challenge of providing abundant and efficient educational, social and fraternal services weighs heavily on your shoulders. By meeting this challenge you build up the Kingdom of God in a visible way and at the same-time make a very valuable contribution to the *development and well-being of your country*. Be assured of the Pope's blessing and support! Take my greetings to your families and communities, especially to the young and the old, and to those who suffer any kind of need!

6. Dear priests, religious and lay men and women: your various vocations are different. Each, in its own way, manifests the deep richness of Christ's redemptive mission at work in the Church. Every vocation and every ecclesial task has its source of life and energy in *the celebration of the Eucharist*. Christ calls you to meet each other and to draw strength for your apostolates at the table of the word and of his Body and Blood.

I am pleased to know that special efforts are being made to make *the treasures of the liturgy* more accessible to the faithful. This will greatly nourish the spiritual life of the Church in Thailand. I hope that more and more lay persons will be able to share in the praying of the Liturgy of the Hours, which is the hymn of praise addressed to God by Christ and by the *whole Church*. This prayer of the Church belongs to all the People of God.

7. Your encounter with Christ in the liturgy and in personal prayer becomes the point of departure for the fulfilment of *your missionary vocation*. For the entire Church is called upon to be missionary. All the Church's members share this task, and not only the brothers and sisters that local Churches in other parts of the world have sent to you, as a living sign of ecclesial communion and Catholicity.

And to you, *missionaries* from other countries, I express an especially cordial greeting! Accept the thanks of the Church and of the Pope for the gift that you have made of yourselves to the Church in Thailand! The Lord Jesus himself accepts your offering and presents it to his Father in union

with his own.

The whole Church in Thailand must be missionary: not out of a spirit of competition, or out of a desire to impose points of view different from the traditional values of the remarkable cultural tradition of this people; but only out of the need *to share* both the divine life that the Holy Spirit nourishes in you and the joy that is yours in Christ.

May our Father in heaven become known, through you, *in the very values* that characterize your Thai culture! May the Holy Spirit form Jesus Christ in you, and through your lives and teaching communicate him to the world. May Mary, the Mother of our divine Saviour, be for ever the cause of your joy!

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