



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE
OF INDONESIA ON THEIR "AD LIMINA" VISIT**

*Redemptoris Mater Chapel
Saturday, 20 May 1989*

Dear Brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ,

1. I am pleased to welcome you, members of the Episcopal Conference of Indonesia, for this collegial meeting on the occasion of your *ad Limina* visit. This assembly is for us a privileged moment of ecclesial communion. It offers us a specific opportunity of renewing the fraternal bonds of unity, charity and peace which we share as members of the apostolic college (Cfr. *Lumen Gentium*, 22). Your presence here today at the tomb of Peter is a manifestation of the catholicity of the Church. Our Catholic unity "in the confession of one faith, in the common celebration of divine worship, and in the fraternal harmony of the family of God" (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 2) is deeper than the bonds of origin, race or nationality, and goes beyond all that distinguishes particular cultures. In all the variety of her members throughout the world, the Catholic Church is gathered in unity by the communion which you as successors of the Apostles share with the successor of Peter (Cfr. *Lumen Gentium*, 23).

We are fellow servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God (Cfr. *1Cor.* 4, 1). You and I in different ways share a common pastoral responsibility for sanctifying, teaching and serving the People of God. Following the heroic witness of the Apostles, we are called "with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, ...to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (*Eph.* 4, 2-3). Accordingly, on this occasion of your *ad Limina* visit I ask the Lord Jesus by the power of his Spirit to assist each of you in your episcopal ministry.

2. My brothers, each of you represents a particular Church in Indonesia and as you come "to visit Peter" (*Gal.* 1, 18) you bring with you the hopes, anxieties, joys and sorrows of all the clergy,

religious and laity whom you serve. You come in the spirit of Saint Paul who laid before the Church his preaching and his activity (Cfr. *ibid.* 2, 2). Each day as I present to God the many needs of the Church throughout the world, I pray for you and those entrusted to your care. "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for all of you..., thankful for your partnership in the Gospel" (*1Phil.* 1, 3-5).

Your local Churches form individual expressions of the one redeemed People of God. Your laity form part of the fabric of Indonesian society in order to transform it by the light of the Gospel. Giving expression to the Gospel in the customs and cultures of your people forms one of the greatest challenges for the Church in your country at the present time. It is by your people patterning their lives according to the teachings of Christ that *an authentic inculturation of the Gospel* takes place, and this enriches the whole Church. In this regard the Second Vatican Council teaches: "The good news of Christ continually renews the life and culture of fallen humanity; it combats and removes the error and evil which flow from the attraction of sin which are a perpetual threat. It never ceases to purify and to elevate the morality of peoples... Thus by the very fulfilment of her own mission the Church stimulates and advances human and civic culture" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 58).

3. Following in the footsteps of my predecessor Paul VI, who travelled personally to your country to confirm you and your people in the profession of the Catholic faith, I am looking forward with joy and great expectation to making *a Pastoral Visit to Indonesia later this year*. For me, these visits are always undertaken in the tradition of the journeys of the first Apostles. I come to Indonesia to proclaim the saving truth about God and man. As I preach the good news of salvation to all the members of the household of the faith, I also wish to hear and see at first hand all the mighty works which the Lord has accomplished in the midst of his people. I want to give *thanks and praise to Almighty God for the many blessings which the Church in Indonesia has received over the past four centuries*, and I want to encourage all your people to persevere in faith, hope and love.

The seven ecclesiastical provinces of your archipelago, like the seven Churches spoken of in the Book of Revelation, have been a fertile seedbed for God's word. The lives of your people have borne much fruit in works of holiness, justice and peace, as a result of God's word planted in their hearts. The tireless labours of many courageous and dedicated missionaries have resulted in the present strength of the Church in your midst. The fortitude and dedication of those heroic men and women are a source of much encouragement for those taking up the continuing challenge of evangelization in your country.

4. Today your local Churches are abundantly blessed by the Lord with *vocations to the priesthood and religious life*. These young Indonesian men and women offer to young people everywhere in the Church a splendid and inspiring example of the joy and fulfilment which are to be found in responding to Christ's call to leave all things and follow him (Cfr. *Matth.* 4, 19-22). Considering the

extraordinary increase of vocations among you, we can truly say that “the word of God increased; and the number of disciples multiplied” (*Act. 6, 7*). This happy situation serves to remind the Church throughout the world of the importance of clearly presenting the need for vocations to the priesthood and the religious life, of encouraging the faithful to pray for this particular intention, and of inviting young men and women to take up the challenge of lifelong commitment to the service of Christ and his Church.

At this time I wish to thank you the Bishops for the careful attention which you give to your seminarians and to their *programmes of priestly formation* in the major seminaries of your country. On many occasions you have stressed that an essential prerequisite for this ecclesial task is the presence of well-qualified priests to serve as spiritual directors and professors on the theological and philosophical faculties. Every effort needs to be made to provide suitable priests for this important work. The question of priestly formation is vital to the life of the Church and, as you know, it will be the theme of the next Ordinary Session of the Synod of Bishops, to which you can offer the testimony of your present joyful experience.

I note that just as the number of candidates for the priesthood has steadily *increased* during the past ten years so has the *number of vocations to the religious life*. In your work with men and women religious I encourage you to continue to manifest the Church’s great esteem and appreciation for their consecrated life. You have recently urged them to reflect ever more clearly the specific charism of their Congregations in appropriate forms of apostolate. The life and work of religious in your local Churches bears witness in a special way to the presence of Christ’s kingdom among your people.

5. Dear brothers, the growth and vitality of your Dioceses is a cause of deep joy and thanksgiving. The Church in your country offers a clear sign of God’s love for his people. The faithful are to be commended for their active participation in many aspects of the Church’s life, even in the most remote mission stations where they gather for liturgical worship, catechesis, mutual support and missionary activity.

In your pastoral ministry to *the family*, the basic unit of society, the first school of Christian sanctity, you can count on the solidity and strength of family ties in traditional Indonesian culture. Cultural differences and the high number of mixed marriages call you to assist the faithful in their commitment to living the Sacrament of Christian Marriage in unity and holiness. The *admirable dedication* of your local Churches *to the education and social development* of the Indonesian people is highly regarded and esteemed by your fellow-citizens. The fact that more than a million students are receiving instruction in Catholic educational institutions eloquently testifies to the concern of the Church in Indonesia for promoting the well-being, harmony and progress of society. The importance of this service to the development of a people is incalculable and it is truly deserving of the care and dedication which the Church has always given it. In this regard, the Government of Indonesia has recognized the important contribution which the Church is making to

the building of a more just and equitable society. It is to be hoped that the laws which govern the civil life of your country will continue to defend the value of *educating the consciences of your students* in freedom. This point honours your people and displays the wisdom which lies at the heart of your civilization.

6. I have already mentioned the heroic lives of the missionaries who first preached the Gospel in your islands. Following their example, your local Churches are called upon to carry forward the task you have inherited from them. Some of your Dioceses are unfortunately experiencing a scarcity of priestly ministers while others are better supplied. I would encourage you therefore to persist in your plan *for a more equal distribution of priests on the national level*. One of the certain signs of the inculturation of the Gospel in your Indonesian society will be the replacement of many of the foreign missionaries still serving in the poorest and most remote areas with your own local clergy. We have reason to hope that the state authorities, who show great concern for the people's welfare, will consent to allowing the ecclesiastical personnel, even if not native-born, to remain at their posts, serving the community in its spiritual and temporal needs.

7. Dear brother Bishops, it is your particular pastoral responsibility to adopt the means most appropriate for proclaiming the message of salvation. The Church does not hesitate to show a deep respect for other religions which are the living expression of the soul of peoples. When Christians and the followers of other religious traditions are united in their belief in the Creator, there exists a profound basis for mutual understanding and peaceful exchange. I encourage you to continue and intensify your collaboration with your Moslem brethren in meeting the challenges of increasing secularization.

As your people continue "to grow in every way into him who is the head, into Christ" (*Eph. 4, 15*), it is important for you as their pastors and teachers to inspire them to uphold and announce with courage and frankness the fundamental "kerigma", the good news that Christ is "the Alpha and the Omega" (*Apoc. 2, 8*). A pluralistic culture like yours in some respects resembles the environment in which the early Christians bore witness to their faith in Christ. May you and your collaborators be filled with fortitude and courage as you witness to the Gospel and may you never yield to fear or hesitancy. The *ecclesial community's role in Indonesian society* is very much like that of the *leaven in the dough* (Cfr. *Matth. 13, 33*) which pervades all of society, giving it a new quality and manner of life.

8. As you return to your pastoral labours, my brothers, I ask you to convey my greetings to your priests and people. Assure them that I am eager *to meet them later this year*.

I pray that you may always prove faithful to the charge given to you by the Lord, namely to lead the People of God in the way of salvation. May the prayers of Saint Francis Xavier, who personally evangelized some of your islands, and of Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus to whom the Catholic people of Indonesia are devoted, sustain you in faith and fidelity. May Mary who is "a sign of sure

hope and solace for the pilgrim People of God” (*Lumen Gentium*, 68) intercede for you and may the peace of Christ be always with you. With my Apostolic Blessing.

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