



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO THE FAR EAST AND MAURITIUS

MEETING WITH THE SEMINARIANS

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

Major Seminary of the Society of the Divine Word, Ledadero
Wednesday, 11 October 1989

Archbishop Djagom,
Brother Bishops,
Priests, Religious and Laity,
Dear Seminarians,

1. *"Rahamat dan damai dari Allah Bapa dan Tuhan Jesus Kristus beserta anda" (Rom. 1, 7).*

The number of candidates for the priesthood present here this evening is an eloquent tribute to the Catholics of Indonesia, especially those from the islands of Flores and Timor, who for centuries have professed their faith with perseverance and great fervour. I join you in thanking God for this flowering of priestly vocations, which is rooted in *the Christian living of your communities, parishes and mission stations*. My thoughts also turn to the parents of these seminarians: I extend to them my special greetings and the deep gratitude of the whole Church for the gift of their sons to the Lord's service.

This gathering is a special moment of grace for us all. For me it is a great consolation to be among so many young men who hear the call to be the priests of the future, *the priests of the Third Christian Millennium*. It is also an occasion for me to speak from my heart about this wonderful gift of a vocation to serve Christ and his Church as a priest.

2. My dear seminarians of Indonesia: what can the Pope offer you? Certainly not “silver and gold” (*Act. 3, 6*) or worldly things that “moth and rust consume” (*Matth. 6, 19*). In the words of Saint Paul, I have nothing to offer you but “*Christ crucified... Christ the power and the wisdom of God*” (*1Cor. 1, 23-24*). The priestly ministry to which you aspire cannot be separated from the Cross by which Christ has redeemed the world. But as Paul also says: “Thanks be to God, who gives us the *victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*” (*Ibid. 15, 57*). “Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep” (*Ibid. 15, 20*).

Yes, as priests you will experience in a very intense way the *paradox of the Paschal Mystery*: you will be identified with the Lord who conquered death by dying; you will have to preach by word and example that the way to find one’s life is to lose it. You must also understand that faithful service to Christ and his Church will not always earn you the world’s praise. On the contrary, you will sometimes receive the same treatment as the Lord: rejection, contempt, and even persecution.

There will be times when you feel unequal to the mission entrusted to you by the Church. But then you must realize that *your priesthood is God’s work*; you are only responding to his call. When you seek to serve the Lord with all your heart and mind and strength, but feel inadequate to the task, remember that God’s power is made perfect in human weakness (Cfr. *2Cor. 12, 9*). Great joy and consolation will not be lacking to a priestly vocation that is lived with fidelity and generosity in the Lord’s service.

3. As priests you will minister to many needy people: the poor, the sick, those without hope. You are called to act as a bridge along their path to God; you must guide and support them on their earthly pilgrimage. They will want to see in you a *living image of the One and Only High Priest* who “appears in the presence of God on our behalf” (*Hebr. 9, 24*), a living image of the *Good Shepherd* “who lays down his life for the sheep” (*Io. 10, 11*).

In order for this to happen, you must enter into deep personal union with Christ through prayer. This is the most important spiritual advice the Pope wishes to leave with you today: *You must pray, for prayer is the indispensable path to union with Christ*; it is the priest’s hidden source of strength. As you prepare for the priesthood, offer Christ your mind and heart in anticipation of the day when you will raise your hands to God in the Eucharistic Prayer. Seek to be ever more perfectly conformed to Christ, for only in this way can you hope to bring his love and truth to others. If you persevere in prayer, you will be capable of great things. Divine grace will not be lacking if you seek the Lord with faith and trust.

In order to be effective ministers of God’s people you must also know and live the Gospel which you preach. The faithful expect you to be *men of God’s Word, and men of the Church* in your way of thinking and acting. Lifelong formation is therefore essential. Remember always that “what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with *ourselves as... servants* for Jesus’ sake” (*1Cor. 4, 5*).

4. In welcoming me here this evening, Archbishop Djagom spoke of the Church's development in Nusa Tenggara. He also referred to pastoral guidelines that have been developed in response to some of today's challenges. I wish to mention two areas of concern that will have an impact on your future ministry as priests.

The first is the temptation in contemporary thought to reduce priestly service to *a vague humanitarianism*, and to consider the essential features of the faith as only inspiring principles, without direct relevance to daily life. This can happen when people are forgetful of God and of man's transcendent origin and destiny.

You who are to be priests must be impelled by the same faith that inspired the great saints before you. You must proclaim that "*man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God*" (*Matth.* 4, 4). Man without God is truly alone and isolated; nor can there be any true and lasting love of neighbour without faith in God. You are called to be sacred ministers precisely so that people may be fed at the table of God's Word and the table of the Holy Eucharist. Do not let your ministry be secularized. Always be ready to *proclaim the primacy of God*, so that the prayer which Christ himself taught us may be fulfilled: "Father... *thy kingdom come*" (*Luc.* 11, 2).

A different but related concern is the need to preserve the complementarity of roles among priests, religious and laity. It is important for this complementarity to be respected, so that each individual can play *his or her part in fulfilling the Church's salvific mission* and in building up the one Body of Christ. As priests you must not give in to the temptation to usurp the laity's role in the temporal order.

As the Second Vatican Council teaches, "it pertains to the laity in a special way to so illuminate and order all temporal things with which they are so closely associated that these may be effected and grow according to Christ" (*Lumen Gentium*, 31). The priest, on the other hand, is "set apart for the Gospel of God" (*Rom.* 1, 1). He cannot allow secular involvement to compromise his position as a father to all who stands above differing points of view in temporal affairs. His duty is "to preach the message of Christ in such a way that the light of the Gospel will shine on all the activities of the faithful" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 43).

5. Dear seminarians of Indonesia: the Second Letter to Timothy speaks of the ministry in terms of the endurance of a soldier, the discipline of an athlete, and the hard work to a farmer (Cfr. *2Tim.* 2, 3-6). *Endurance, discipline and hard work*: these are virtues you must cultivate during your years of preparation for the priesthood. You have already learned much from your families and local communities. Now you are called to grow even more with the good example and guidance of your seminary teachers. "*And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony*" (*Col.* 3, 14). In this way you will become worthy shepherds and teachers of God's people, courageous apostles and prophets of the Gospel.

May the Mother of God, who is invoked in your islands under the title "*Maris Stella*", guide you to the priesthood. May she intercede for all who are present here and lead the whole Church in Indonesia to an ever greater love for her Son. To him be glory for ever. Amen.

"Akhirnya, putera-puteraku yang terkasih, saya dengan senang hati akan memberikan Berkat Apostolik kepada Anda sekalian".

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