

Love Christ and through Christ, Men!

In the course of a concelebrated Mass in the Dominican Republic, Pope John Paul II delivered the following homily.

In this Eucharist in which we share the same faith in Christ, the Bishop of Rome and of the universal Church, present among you, gives you his greeting of peace: "Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ."



I come to these American lands as a pilgrim of peace and hope, to take part in an ecclesial event of evangelization, urged in my turn by the words of the Apostle Paul: "If I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!" (1 Cor 9:16.)

The present period of the history of humanity calls for a renewed transmission of faith, to communicate to modern man the perennial message of Christ, adapted to his concrete conditions of life.

This evangelization is a constant and an essential exigency of ecclesial dynamics. In his encyclical *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Paul VI affirmed: "Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize..." (n. 14.)

And the same Pontiff states that "as an evangelizer, Christ first of all proclaims a kingdom, the kingdom of God". "As the kernel and the center of his Good News, Christ proclaims salvation, this great gift which is, above all, liberation from everything that oppresses man but which is, above all, liberation from sin and the Evil One." (n 8-9.)

The Church, faithful to her mission continues to present to the men of every age, with the help of the Holy Spirit and under the Pope's guidance, the message of salvation of her divine Founder.

This Dominican land was once the first to receive, and then to give impetus to a grand enterprise of evangelization which deserves great admiration and gratitude.

From the end of the fifteenth century, this beloved nation opens us to the faith of Jesus Christ; to this it has remained faithful up to the present. The Holy See, on its side, creates the first episcopal sees of America precisely in this island, and subsequently the archepiscopal and primatial see of Santo Domingo.

In a comparatively short period, the paths of faith

crossed the Dominican land and the continent in all directions, laying the foundations of the heritage, become life, that we contemplate today in what was called the New World.

From the first moments of the discovery, there appears the concern of the Church to make the kingdom of God present in the heart of the new peoples, races, and cultures; in the first place, among your ancestors.

If we wish to express our well-deserved thanks to those who transplanted the seeds of faith, this tribute must be paid in the first place to the religious orders which distinguished themselves, even at the cost of offering their martyrs, in the task of evangelization: above all, the Dominicans, Franciscans, Augustinians, Mercedarians and then the Jesuits, who made the tender plant grow into a spreading tree. The fact is that the soil of America was prepared to receive the new Christian seeds by movements of spirituality of its own.

Nor is it a question, moreover, of a spreading of the faith detached from the life of those for whom it was intended; although it must always keep its essential reference to God. Therefore the Church in this island was the first to demand justice and to promote the defence of human rights in the lands that were opening to evangelization.

Lessons of humanism, spirituality and effort to raise man's dignity, are taught to us by Antonio Montesinos, Cordoba, Bartolome de las Casas, echoed also in other parts by Juan de Zumarraga, Motolinia, Vasco de Quiroga, Jose de Anchieta, Toribio de Mogrovejo, Nóbrega and so many others. They are men in whom pulsates concern for the weak, for the defenseless, for the natives; subjects worthy of all respect as persons and as bearers of the image of God, destined for a transcendent vocation. The first International Law has its origin here with Francisco de Victoria.

The fact is that the proclamation of the Gospel and human advancement cannot be dissociated — this is the great lesson, valid also today. But for the Church, the former cannot be confused or exhausted, as some people claim, in the latter. That would be to close to man infinite spaces that God has opened to him. And it would be to distort the deep and complete meaning of evangelization, which is above all the proclamation of the Good News of Christ the Saviour.

The Church, an expert in humanity, faithful to the signs of the times, and in obedience to the pressing call of the last Council, wishes to continue today her mission of faith and defense of human rights. She calls upon Christians to commit themselves to the con-

struction of a more just, human and habitable world, which is not shut up within itself, but opens to God.

To construct this more just world means, among other things, making every effort in order that there will be no children without sufficient food, without education, without instruction; that there will be no young people without a suitable preparation; that, in order to live and to develop in a worthy way, there will be no peasants without land; that there will be no workers ill-treated or deprived of their rights; that there will be no systems that permit the exploitation of man by man or by the State; that there will be no corruption; that there will be no persons living in superabundance, while others through no fault of their own lack everything; that there will not be so many families badly formed, broken, disunited, receiving insufficient care; that there will be no injustice and inequality in the administration of justice; that there will be no one without the protection of the law, and that law will protect all alike; that force will not prevail over truth and law, but truth and law over force; and that economic or political matters will never prevail over human matters.

But do not be content with this more human world. Make a world that is explicitly more divine, more in accordance with God, ruled by faith, and in which this latter inspires the moral, religious, and social progress of man. Do not lose sight of the vertical dimension of evangelization. It has strength to liberate man, since it is the revelation of love. The love of the Father for men, for one and all; a love revealed in Jesus Christ. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." (Jn 3:16.)

Jesus Christ manifested this love above all in his hidden life — "He has done all things well" (Mk 7:37) — and by proclaiming the Gospel; then, by his death and resurrection, the paschal mystery in which man meets with his definitive vocation to eternal life, to union with God. This is the eschatological dimension of love.

Behold Sons: I conclude by exhorting you always to be worthy of the faith that you have received. Love Christ, love man through him, and live devotion to our beloved Mother in heaven, whom you invoke with the beautiful name Our Lady de la Altagracia (of the High Grace) and to whom the Pope wishes to leave a diadem as a homage of devotion. May she help you to walk towards Christ, preserving and fully developing the seed planted by your first evangelizers. This is what the Pope hopes from all of you. From you, sons of Cuba, present here, from you sons of Jamaica, Curacao and the Antilles, Haiti, Venezuela, and the United States. Above all, from you sons of the Dominican land.

Amen.

More Opinions

Favors Death Penalty

Editor:

An ecumenical communique eschewing the death penalty, as reported in the Feb. 7 *Courier-Journal*, is positive in the sense that Catholics and Protestants have established additional commonality in beliefs. Similar thinking does not, however, insure sound thinking.

It is vogue in some circles in the Church to embrace a humane and sound premise that "all life is sacred." Some polemicists have distorted a basically sound premise by deducing from it an abomination. That abomination is the non-sequitur that if someone is opposed to abortion, it necessarily follows he must also be opposed to capital punishment.

Au contraire, Descartes.

I have been able to

condemn abortion yet advocate capital punishment very easily, thank you, and do so with great aplomb. Most of the time skeptics do not even doubt my sanity.

Consider this: the common element of abortion and capital punishment is that a life is taken. If you concede that all life is sacred, it violates Natural Law, therefore, to take life under any circumstances. But what then, of God Himself? God is the font from Whom Natural Law flows. The expression "Only God can take life" becomes anomalous because even God Himself could not violate Natural Law, since Natural Law is an extension of Himself. If causing physical death is contrary to Natural Law, then God, who designed our astounding yet frail bodies, also violates Natural Law.

Which of you guys is going to tell Him?

The answer lies, then, in

drawing a distinction between "killing" and "murder" when discussing the taking of a human life.

The Philosophy of Ethics would define "killing" as the taking of life, while "murder" is the unjust taking of life.

If one does not differentiate between killing and murdering, then one could say that God, who permits our bodies to deteriorate and die, is a murderer.

Again, which one of you guys is going to tell Him?

The consummate "Right to Lifer," when challenged by a capital punishment advocate to explain why a murderer should not forfeit his life, since he unjustly snuffed out the life of an innocent person, will smugly respond, "Two wrongs don't make a right." To be fully effective, the consummate "Right to Lifer" should say, in the most condescending manner possible, reserved for dealings with sub-cretins, "Taking the murderer's life won't bring back the victim."

The philosophy that "two wrongs don't make a right" begs the question. In fact, two wrongs are not being committed. Only one wrong has been committed: murder. Ethics classifies acts into three categories: right, wrong, and indifferent. Murder is wrong, killing is indifferent (neither right or wrong). Couched in these terms, we don't have "two wrongs." Also couched in these terms, abortion is murder, but capital punishment is killing.

"Semantics," you say. Well, pure ethics teaches the concepts of right, wrong, and indifferent, which supposedly are immutable. Immutability was the doctrine which resulted in "situation ethics" being scorned.

Has Vatican II also permitted lifeboat ethics? I doubt it.

Although I condemn abortion, but under firm strictures, favor capital punishment. I assure you, I don't have two heads.

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Teach Them To Pray

Editor:

Everyone knows by now that 1979 has been declared by the United Nations as "The Year of the Child." The idea is to see that more care is given to the children of the world, especially the poor.

A beautiful idea — but what can we do for our own children, who are so much more fortunate than many?

To start with, we must teach our children respect for all forms of life, which they do not seem to be learning in some of our schools. Most children do not know that a fetus is a living baby, protected by the womb while it is forming its unique body.

We all know that the elderly deserve respect from children. The very old and the very young could have a close relationship since they really do have much in common. Have you ever

watched the face of an elderly person in a hospital or home when a small child comes to visit? Or the expression on a little one's face as an elderly grandmother relates how her Christmas used to be many years ago in a different country?

Now what about the handicapped — what are our children taught about them? Are they taught that they are useless beings? Or are they taught that they have the same imprint on their minds and souls as we have, from the Almighty Hand that created us all? God chose each one of us to exist.

During this "Year of the Child" the most important job we parents have, besides teaching our children respect for life, is to pray for them and to teach them how to pray. Our children will have more decisions to make concerning life than we ever will. Teach them — and pray for them.

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