

Text of Address at Battery Park

Dear friends of New York,

My visit to your City would not have been complete without coming to Battery Park, without seeing Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty in the distance. Every nation has its historical symbols. They may be shrines or statues or documents; but their significance lies in the truths they represent to the citizens of a nation and in the image they convey to other nations. Such a symbol in the United States is the Statue of Liberty. This is an impressive symbol of what the United States has stood for from the very beginning of its history; this is a symbol of freedom. It reflects the immigrant history of the United States, for it was freedom that millions of human beings were looking for on these shores. And it was freedom that the young Republic offered in compassion. On this spot, I wish to pay homage to this noble trait of America and its people: its desire to be free, its determination to preserve freedom, and its willingness to share this freedom with others. May the ideal of liberty, of freedom remain a moving force for your nation and for all the nations in the world today!

It greatly honors your country and its citizens that on this foundation of liberty you have built a nation where the dignity of every human person is to be respected, where a religious sense and a strong family structure are fostered, where duty and honest work are held in high esteem, where generosity and hospitality are no idle words, and where the right to religious liberty is deeply rooted in your history.

Yesterday, before the General Assembly of the United Nations, I made a plea for peace and justice based on the full respect of all the fundamental rights of the human person. I also spoke of religious freedom because it regards a person's relationship to God, and because it is related in a special way to other human rights. It is closely allied with the right to freedom of conscience. If conscience is not secure in society, then the security of all others rights is threatened.

Liberty, in all aspects, must be based on truth. I want to repeat here the words of Jesus "the truth will make you free." It is then my wish that your sense of freedom may

always go hand in hand with a profound sense of truth and honesty about yourselves and about the realities of your society. Past achievements can never be an acceptable substitute for present responsibilities toward the common good of the society you live in and towards your fellow-citizens. Just as the desire for freedom is a universal aspiration in the world today, so is the quest for justice. No institution or organization can credibly stand for freedom today if it does not also support the quest for justice, for both are essential demands of the human spirit.

It will always remain one of the glorious achievements of this nation that, when people looked toward America, they received together with freedom also a chance for their own advancement. This tradition must be honored also today. The freedom that was gained, must be ratified each day by the firm rejection of whatever wounds, weakens or dishonors human life. And so I appeal to all who love freedom and justice to give a chance to all in need, to the poor and the powerless. Break open the hopeless cycles of

poverty and ignorance that are still the lot of too many of our brothers and sisters; the hopeless cycles of prejudices that linger on despite enormous progress toward effective equality in education and employment; the cycles of despair in which are imprisoned all those that lack decent food, shelter or employment; the cycles of underdevelopment that are the consequence of international mechanisms that subordinate the human existence to the domination of partially conceived economic progress; and finally the inhuman cycles of war that springs from the violation of man's fundamental rights and produces still graver violation of them.

Freedom in justice will bring a new dawn of hope for the present generation as it has done before: for the homeless, for the unemployed, for the aging, for the sick and the handicapped, for the migrants and the undocumented workers, for all who hunger for human dignity in this land and in the world.

With sentiments of admiration and with confidence

in your potential for true human greatness, I wish to greet in you the rich variety of your nation, where people of different ethnic origins and creeds can live, work and prosper together in freedom and mutual respect. I greet and I thank for the cordial welcome of all those who joined me here, businessmen and laborers, scholars and managers, social workers and civil servants, old and young. I greet you with respect, esteem and love. My warm greetings go to each and every group, to my fellow Catholics, to the members of the different Christian Churches with whom I am united in the faith in Jesus Christ.

And I address a special word of greeting to the leaders of the Jewish community whose presence here honors me greatly. A few months ago, I met with an international group of Jewish representatives in Rome. On that occasion, recalling the initiatives undertaken following the Second Vatican Council under my predecessor Paul VI, I stated that "our two communities are connected and closely related at the very level of their respective religious identities."

and that on this basis "we recognize with utmost clarity that the path along which we should proceed is one of fraternal dialogue and fruitful collaboration." I am glad to ascertain that this same path has been followed here, in the United States, by large sections of both communities and their respective authorities and representative bodies. Several common programs of study, mutual knowledge, a common determination to reject all forms of anti-semitism and discrimination, and various forms of collaboration for the human advancement, inspired by our common biblical heritage, have created deep and permanent links between Jews and Catholics. As one who in my homeland has shared the suffering of your brethren, I greet you with the word taken from the Hebrew language: Shalom! Peace be with you.

And to everyone here I offer the expression of my respect, my esteem and my fraternal love. May God bless all of you! May God bless New York!

Philadelphia Civic Center

Christ, God's call has indeed stirred us to the depths of our being. And after centuries of experience, the church knows how deeply fitting it is that priests should give this concrete response in their lives to express the totality of the 'yes' they have spoken to the Lord who calls them by name to his service.

The fact that there is a personal individual call to the priesthood given by the Lord to the men he himself had decided on is in accord with the prophetic tradition. It should help us too to understand that the church's traditional decision to call men to the priesthood, and not to call women, is not a statement about human rights, nor an exclusion of women from holiness and mission in the church. Rather, this decision expresses the conviction of the church about this particular dimension of the gift of priesthood by which God has chosen to shepherd his flock.

Priestly ministry is missionary in its very core: it means being sent out for others, like Christ sent from his Father, for the sake of the Gospel, sent to evangelize. In the words of Paul VI, 'evangelizing means bringing the good news into all the strata of humanity . . . and making it new.'

At the foundation and center of its dynamism, evangelization contains a clear proclamation that salvation is in Jesus Christ the Son of God. It is his name, his teaching, his life, his promises, his kingdom and his mystery that we proclaim to the world. And the effectiveness of our proclamation, and hence the very success of our priesthood, depends on our fidelity to the magisterium through which the church guards the rich deposit of faith with the help of the Holy Spirit who dwells within us.

As a pattern for every ministry and apostolate in the

'Priesthood is an abiding sacramental sign which shows that the love of the Good Shepherd for his flock will never be absent.'

church, priestly ministry is never to be conceived in terms of an acquisition; in so far as it is a gift, it is a gift to be proclaimed and shared with others.

Just as Jesus was most perfectly a 'man-for-others' in giving himself up totally on the cross, so the priest is most of all servant and 'man-for-others' when he acts in persona Christi in the eucharist, leading the church

the source and the summit of all evangelization.' In the celebration of the eucharist, we priests are at the very heart of our ministry of service, of 'giving God's flock a shepherd's care.' All our pastoral endeavors are incomplete until our people are led to the full and active participation in the eucharistic sacrifice.

Let us recall how Jesus named 12 as his companions.

'Priestly ministry is never to be conceived of in terms of acquisition . . .'

in that celebration in which this sacrifice of the cross is renewed.

How perfectly the fathers of the Second Vatican Council captured this fundamental truth in their Decree on Priestly Life and Ministry: 'The other sacraments, as every ministry of the church and every work of the apostolate, are linked with the holy eucharist and are directed towards it. Hence the eucharist shows itself to be

The call to priestly service includes an invitation to special intimacy with Christ. The lived experience of priests in every generation has led them to discover in their own lives and ministry the absolute centrality of their personal union with Jesus, of being his companions. No one can effectively bring the good news of Jesus to others unless he himself has first been his constant companion through personal prayer, unless he has learned from Jesus his

mystery to be proclaimed.

This union with Jesus, modeled on his oneness with his Father, has a further intrinsic dimension, as his own prayer at the Last Supper reveals: 'that they may be one, Father, even as we are one.' His priesthood is one, and this unity must be actual and effective among his chosen companions.

Unity among priests is not a unity or fraternity that is directed towards itself. It is for the sake of the Gospel, to symbolize, in the living out of the priesthood, the essential direction to which the Gospel calls all people: to the union of love with him and one another. And this union alone can guarantee peace and justice and dignity to every human being.

My brother priests: have we not here touched upon the heart of the matter — our zeal for the priesthood itself? It is inseparable from our zeal for the service of the people. This consecrated mass, which so beautifully symbolizes the unity of our priesthood, gives to the whole world the witness of the unity for which Jesus prayed to his Father on our behalf. But it must not become a merely transient manifestation, which would render fruitless the prayer of Jesus. Every eucharist renews this prayer for our unity: "Lord, remember your church throughout the world; make us grow in love, together with John Paul our Pope . . . our Bishop, and all the clergy."

Your priests' synods, as new structures in the Church, provide a wonderful opportunity to give visible witness to the one priesthood you share with your Bishops and with one another, and to demonstrate what must be at the heart of the renewal of every structure in the Church: the unity for which Jesus himself prayed.

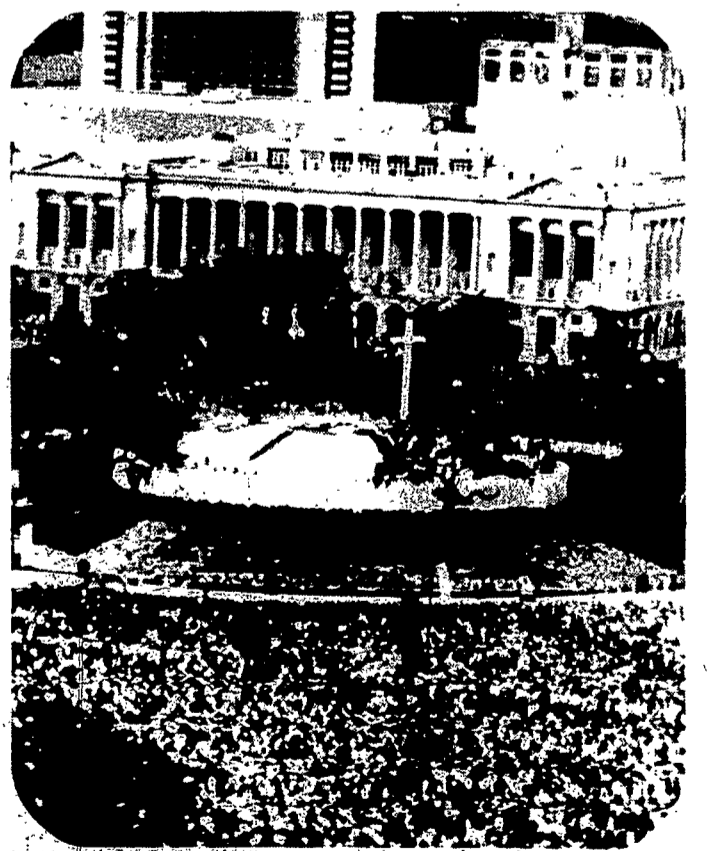
At the beginning of this homily, I charged you with the task of taking respon-

'Priesthood is forever . . . we do not return the gift once given.'

sibility for your priesthood, a task for each one of you personally, a charge to be shared with all the priests, and especially to be a concern for your priests' councils. The faith of the whole church needs to have clearly in focus the proper understanding of the priesthood and of its place in the mission of the church. So the church depends on you to deepen ever more this understanding, and to put it into practice in your lives and ministry: in other words, to share the gift of your priesthood with the church by renewing the response you

have already made to Christ's invitation — 'come, follow me' — by giving yourselves as totally as he did.

At times we hear the words, 'Pray for priests.' And today I address these words as an appeal, as a plea, to all the faithful of the church in the United States. Pray for priests, so that each and every one of them will repeatedly say yes to the call he has received, remain constant in preaching the Gospel message, and be faithful forever as the companion of our Lord Jesus Christ.



A crowd of one million people are shown on Oct. 3 as they gathered to attend a papal Mass in Philadelphia's Logan Square. During his homily the pontiff declared that freedom is "not an absolute end in itself," but is "a gift that enables self-giving and service." (RNS)