

THE POPE

'Use Suffering,' Pontiff Urges Faithful

Vatican City (NC — Here is the Vatican text of Pope John Paul II's message for World Mission Day, to be celebrated Oct. 21. The message was dated June 10.

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In this message for World Mission Day 1984, I would energetically exhort all the faithful to make full use of suffering in its myriad forms, uniting it to the sacrifice of the cross for evangelization, that is, for the redemption of those who do not yet know Christ.



I entrust this program in a special way to the Pontifical Missionary Societies, which are the privileged instruments of the Church's missionary dynamism.

Beloved brothers and sisters! "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of Christians" (Tertullian, "Apologetics," 50).

During my recent apostolic journey in the Far East, I had the joy of canonizing 103 confessors of the Catholic faith, who, evangelizing Korea with the announcement of the message of Christ, had the privilege of witnessing to the certainty of eternal life in the risen Lord by the supreme sacrifice of their earthly life.

That circumstance suggested some reflections to me which I would like to present to the attention of all the faithful for the coming World Mission Day.

1. The redemptive value of the cross

In reality, the letters and the acts of the apostles confirm the fact that it is a special grace to be able to suffer "for the name of Jesus." We read, for example, how the apostles "left...glad to have had the honor of suffering humiliation for the sake of the name of Jesus" (Acts 5:41), in perfect fidelity to what the redeemer had proclaimed in the discourse on the mountain: "Happy are you when people abuse you and persecute you and speak all kinds of calumny against you on my account. Rejoice and be glad..." (Mt 5:11).

Christ himself effected his work of redeeming humanity above all through the painful passion and the most atrocious martyrdom, indicating at the same time the way for his followers: "If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Mt 16:24). Love, therefore, inevitably passes through the cross and in this it becomes creative and the inexhaustible source of redeeming power. "Remember," writes St. Peter, "the ransom that was paid to free you from the useless way of life your ancestors handed down was not paid in anything corruptible, neither in silver nor gold, but in the precious blood of a lamb without spot or stain, namely Christ" (1 Pt 1:18-19, cfr. 1 Cor 6:20).

During the Holy Year of the Redemption which was concluded a short time ago, we have meditated profoundly on this extraordinary mystery of divine love. Millions of the faithful have meditated and lived it in the depths of their hearts, many of whom came to Rome to renew their profession of faith at the tombs of the apostles, the first to

have shared the martyrdom of the master. Faith that found its first witness already at the foot of the cross in the words of the centurion and of those guarding Jesus: "In truth this was a son of God" (Mt 27:54).

Since that crucial event for human history, the apostles and their successors have continued, throughout the course of the centuries, to announce the death and the resurrection of Christ, our only Savior: "For of all the names in the world given to men, this is the only one by which we can be saved" (Acts 4:12). But it was in a particular way the witness of suffering to the extreme limit, offered by Christ as well as by his followers, that opened the mind and the heart of men to be converted to the Gospel: witness of supreme love; in fact, "A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends" (Jn 15:13).

And it is this witness that the ranks of martyrs and confessors have given through the ages; their sacrifice and their immolation has made possible the birth and the flourishing of the various Churches — such as that of the Korean Church to which I referred earlier — and their blood has fructified new lands, transforming them into fertile fields of the Gospel; in fact, "unless a wheat grain falls into the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies, it yields a rich harvest" (Jn 12:24).

These heroes understood well and carried out the fundamental concept — expressed by me in the letter on the Christian meaning of human suffering — according to which, if Christ effected the redemption of humanity with the cross and suffered in the place of man and for man, every man "is called to share in that suffering through which all human suffering has also been redeemed. In bringing about the redemption through suffering, Christ has also raised human suffering to the level of the redemption. Thus, each man, in his suffering, can also become a sharer in the redemptive suffering of Christ" ("Salvifici Doloris," 19).

2. Suffering, a precious instrument of evangelization

It seems to me that the missionary implications of what I have said are evident. However, in this message for World Mission Day 1984, I would energetically exhort all the faithful to make full use of suffering in its myriad forms, uniting it to the sacrifice of the cross for evangelization, that is, for the redemption of those who do not yet know Christ.

There are yet millions of our brothers who do not know the Gospel and who do not enjoy the immense treasures of the heart of the Redeemer. For them there is no adequate explanation for suffering; it is the most oppressing and inexplicable absurdity which contrasts tragically with the aspirations of man for complete happiness.

Only the cross of Christ casts a ray of light on this mystery; only in the cross can man find a valid response to the anguishing question that rises from the experience of suffering. The saints have deeply understood it and accepted it, and at times have even ardently desired to be associated to the passion of the Lord, making their own the words of the apostle: "I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the Church" (Col 1:24).

Therefore, I invite all the faithful who suffer — and no one is exempt from suffering — to give this apostolic and missionary significance to their sufferings.

St. Francis Xavier, patron of the missions, in his zeal as an evangelizer, on the way to carry the name of Jesus to the very ends of the earth, did not hesitate to face every type of pain: hunger, cold, shipwreck, persecution, sickness; it was only death that brought an end to his course.

St. Therese of the Child Jesus, patron of the missions, a prisoner of love in the carmel of Lisieux, would have wanted to traverse the whole world to plant the cross of Christ in every place. "I would like to be a missionary," she writes, "not only for some years, but I would want to have been a missionary from the creation of the world and to be one to the consummation of the centuries." ("Story of a Soul," manuscript B, p. 3 R) And she concretized the universality and the apostolicity of her desires in the suffering asked of God and in the precious offering of herself as a voluntary victim of merciful love. Suffering that attained its culmination and at the same time its highest level of apostolic fecundity in martyrdom of the spirit, in the anguish of the obscurity of faith, heroically offered to obtain the light of faith for the many brothers still immersed in darkness.

In pointing out to us these two illustrious models, the Church not only invites us to reflection but also to imitation.

We can, therefore, actively collaborate in the spread of the kingdom of Christ and in the building up of his mystical body in a three-fold manner:

- Learning to give to our own suffering its most authentic purpose, which is rooted in the dynamism of the participation of the Church in the redeeming work of Christ.

- Inviting our brothers who are suffering spiritually and physically to understand this apostolic dimension of suffering and consequently to utilize their trials, their pains in a missionary sense.

- Making our own, with inexhaustible charity, the suffering that daily strikes many parts of humanity, anguishing from sickness, from hunger, from persecutions, deprived of fundamental and inalienable rights, such as liberty; suffering humanity, in which the face of Christ, the "man of sorrows" must be seen, and which we must seek to alleviate as much as possible.

3. The utilization of suffering: a program of the Pontifical Missionary Societies

This program, ample and complete, calls for a generous availability in all the faithful. I desire to present it to all Christians, recalling again how every baptized person is and must be missionary, although in diverse measure and manner (cfr. "Ad Gentes," 36; Code of Canon Law, can. 781).

I entrust it in a special way to the Pontifical Missionary Societies, which are the privileged instruments of the Church's missionary dynamism, and which not only specifically on World Mission Day, but during the course of the whole year must promote the missionary spirit, an element that is not merely marginal but essential to the nature of the mystical body.

The Society for the Propagation of the Faith, the Society of St. Peter Apostle for seminaries and for priestly and religious vocations in the mission territories, the Holy Childhood Association, the Pontifical Missionary Union of priests, religious men and women and secular institutes, constitute many instruments, proven by decades of years of experience, for missionary promotion in the diverse sectors.

I am well aware how these worthy societies, in addition to collecting economic means offered by the generosity of the faithful — means indispensable for the actualization of Churches, seminaries, schools, asylums, hospitals — carry out an intense work of missionary animation. Likewise the utilization of sufferings for a missionary purpose, which I wanted to present for special consideration to all the people of God for World Mission Day 1984, constitutes one of the most noble expressions of their apostolate, and which has awakened prompt acceptance among the sick, the elderly, the abandoned, the emarginated, as also among the imprisoned.

But it is necessary to do more. There are in fact many human sufferings that have not yet found their sublime purpose and their apostolic outlet, which would bring about immense good for the progress of evangelization, for the expansion of the mystical body of Christ.

This is perhaps the highest form of missionary cooperation, because it reaches its maximum efficacy specifically in the union of the sufferings of men with the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary, constantly renewed on the altars.

Beloved brothers and sisters, who suffer in soul and in body, know that the Church relies on you, the pope counts on you, so that the name of Jesus may be proclaimed to the limits of the earth. I would like to recall yet what I wrote in the letter on the Christian meaning of human suffering: "The Gospel of suffering is being written unceasingly and it speaks unceasingly with the words of this strange paradox: the springs of divine power gush forth precisely in the midst of human weakness. Those who share in the sufferings of Christ preserve in their own sufferings a very special particle of the infinite treasure of the world's redemption and can share this treasure with others. The more a person is threatened by sin, the heavier the structures of sin which today's world brings with it, the greater is the eloquence which human suffering possesses in itself. And the more the Church feels the need to have recourse to the value of human sufferings for the salvation of the world" ("Salvifici Doloris," 27).

May Mary, "queen of martyrs" and "queen of apostles" awaken in all the desire to be associated to the passion of Christ, redeemer of the world.

On this Pentecost Sunday, which must be lived in a missionary spirit by the whole Church, I am happy to impart my special apostolic blessing to those who, directly or indirectly, expend their energies and offer their sufferings to communicate the light of the Gospel to all humanity.

From the Vatican, June 10, solemnity of Pentecost, in the year 1984, sixth of the pontificate. (Signed) John Paul II.

Pope on Birth Control

Vatican City (NC) — Here is the Vatican text of the remarks in English by Pope John Paul II during his general audience Sept. 5.

Dear brothers and sisters,

During these past weeks we have been presenting the Church's teaching on birth regulation according to "Humanae Vitae" and "Familiaris Consortio." Here we have been emphasizing that the true dignity of the human person is preserved by having recourse only to those methods which are natural.

As reasonable and free creatures, husband and wife exercise responsible parenthood by following these natural methods. In this way they conform their actions to the plan of the Creator and to the truth of their own nature.

The use of "infertile periods" for conjugal union can,

however, be an abuse if the couple is seeking in this way to avoid having children for unworthy reasons. The encyclical "Humanae Vitae" presents responsible parenthood as an expression of a high ethical value. In no way is it exclusively directed to limiting, much less excluding, children. It implies a more profound relationship to the objective moral order established by God, of which a right conscience is the faithful interpreter.

Truly responsible parenthood is linked to the moral maturity of the couple. They are called to exercise temperance and to use a natural method which is morally acceptable. However, this method can never be perceived in a merely functional or utilitarian way, separating it from the ethical dimension.

Rather, the method must be seen as the means of conforming their activity to the creative intention of God.

Ray Repp Workshop Scheduled

Caledonia — Ray Repp, widely acknowledged to be the person most responsible for introducing folk music in Christian churches, will be the guest speaker at a workshop and cabaret given by St. Columba-St. Patrick parishes.

The workshop will be held

1:30-4:30 p.m., Saturday, Sept. 29 in the United Presbyterian Stone Church on Church Street. Repp will lead discussions on the basics of liturgical music, including such questions as "What is liturgy?" "What should we be singing about?" and "How can music add to our celebration."

Federation Tea

The Rochester Federation of Women's Clubs will hold its annual "Silver Tea," 1-4 p.m., Thursday, Sept. 13 at the Susan B. Anthony House, 17 Madison St.

The workshop will be followed by a cabaret evening, 7:30 p.m., in St. Columba Church hall on North Street. The public is invited to the event which will

feature songs by Repp, wine or soft drinks and cheese.

The cost of the workshop is \$6, and the cabaret \$5. A box supper at \$2.50 will be provided those who attend both events.

Tickets are now on sale. Registrations and fees are sent to St. Columba Church — Ray Repp, 198 North St., Caledonia, N.Y. 14423; checks made payable to St. Columba Church. Tickets will also be available at the door.

Ss. Peter, Paul Soup Kitchen Raises Funds

In an attempt to raise funds for the widely hailed St. Peter's Kitchen, Ss. Peter and Paul Parish has slated an Attic and Baked Goods Sale, 10 a.m.-6 p.m., Saturday, Sept. 15; and the same hours on Sunday, Sept. 16.

The event will take place in the dining room of St. Peter's Kitchen, 681 Brown Street.

The sale will also benefit the parish's day care center. St. Peter's Kitchen serves food to anyone asking for it.