



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC PILGRIMAGE
OF HIS HOLINESS OF PAUL VI
TO WEST ASIA, OCEANIA AND AUSTRALIA

ORDINATION OF THE FIRST BISHOP BORN IN NEW GUINEA

HOMILY OF THE HOLY FATHER PAUL VI

*Australia, Sydney
Thursday, 3 December 1970*

Dear Sons and Daughters,

Our joy at being in your midst on this last day of Our stay in Australia is all the greater because Providence has given Us the opportunity to raise to the order of bishop, and so to that of a close collaborator as a successor of the apostles, a son of the mission lands in the immensity of Oceania. We ask you to join Us in thanking Almighty God for this.

What a unique occasion it is at the same time for a meditation on our missionary duty! Let us turn our thoughts once more to the great teaching on brotherly love that Jesus give on Holy Thursday evening. He calls it the «new commandment». It is the Gospel's culminating point. Nothing, he tells us, is greater than love for one's brothers, for it is first and foremost by its exercise that his disciples are known (Cfr. *Io.* 13: 33-35).

If we let our minds and hearts be opened to this new law, everything takes on a new aspect. For everything is illumined in a way until then unknown: not only our spiritual life and our contacts with our brothers, but all our activity, even what seems the least sacred. Love is light and strength. Love is communication. It was because of the driving force of love that the apostles went beyond the borders of their own land and journeyed to the frontiers of the Roman Empire and doubtless even further.

The missionary mandate, «Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations» (*Matth.* 28: 19), is always relevant. Throughout the centuries Jesus Christ repeats to all classes of the baptized his missionary command: «As the Father

sent me, so am I sending you» (*Io. 20: 21*). Our missionary duty finds its origin in this order. It finds its source in the merciful love of the Father for all mankind, without distinction of persons. «Hence, prompted by the Holy Spirit, the Church must walk the same road which Christ walked», and the Church means all of us, joined together like a body receiving its life-giving influence from the Lord Jesus (Cfr. *Ad gentes*, 5). God chose to rely on men to be the bearers of his Gospel, the stewards of his grace, and the builders of his Kingdom. Who can claim that this is no concern of his? Since there is a variety of conditions of life, and, consequently, different ways of giving a response, every member of the Church is reached by this call which is directed to each and every one. The whole Church is missionary, for her missionary activity, as the recent Council so forcibly reminded us, is an essential part of her vocation. To forget it or to carry it out carelessly would be, on our part, a betrayal of our Master. We are dealing with a fundamental impulse, a duty of the first order, one which we must all accept, without leaving any room for doubt or limitation.

In the course of this moving ceremony, in which for the first time a Christian of New Guinea ascends to the fulness of the priesthood, We find it easy to speak to you of the missions. Between Our stay in the Philippines and Our arrival in your country We have ourselves been in an immense mission region beyond the borders of Australia. Measureless distances, numberless islands scattered over the ocean surface and many isolated peoples are waiting for the announcement of the Good News-what a call, on your very doorstep, brothers and sisters of Australia! Lift up your eyes and look at this vast harvest waiting for reapers to gather it in (Cfr. *Io. 4: 35*). Is it possible that your community, which has had the great good fortune to receive the grace of the Gospel, which has responded with fervour to the teaching of your priests, and which offers the world a noteworthy testimony of faith, fidelity to doctrine, and generosity towards the upkeep of works of the apostolate-is it possible for it not to be at the same time a land of missionaries?

Young men and women listening to Us, do you not hear the call of the Lord urging you, launch out on to the deep and go to serve the poorest? You parents, so worthy of being held up as examples of so many domestic virtues, will you not share the most precious thing you have received, the gift of faith, by allowing your children to consecrate themselves to the pursuit of the very mission of Jesus Christ? Members of the parish clergy, and you the religious who serve the many schools and colleges throughout your great country, will you not hold up, as the great witness to Christian life, enrolment in the peaceful army of missionaries? It is the Pope who asks this of you, and he would like to take back from this meeting with you, which gives him so much comfort, the hope for a levy of volunteers for the God-given work of evangelization, a work so closely bound up with men's aspirations for peace, truth, and brotherly love (Cfr. *Ad gentes*, 8). This is the work that reveals to men the one who is «the Way, the Truth and the Life» (*Io. 14: 6; 11: 25*).

May God hear our prayer. May he fill your hearts with graces, and make them rich with a sharing in his love.