



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER PAUL VI
TO THE BISHOPS OF SCOTLAND
ON THEIR AD LIMINA VISIT***

Saturday, 4 March 1978

Venerable and dear Brothers in Christ,

It is a great pleasure for us to welcome you this morning. For one hundred years ago today, in what was in fact his first Apostolic Bull, “Ex Supremo Apostolatus Apice”, our predecessor Leo XIII restored the Hierarchy of the Catholic Church in Scotland -the Church that he referred to as a “beloved daughter of the Holy See”.

And today, in the unity of Jesus Christ, we celebrate together this important anniversary. As we do so, we recall with loving thanksgiving not only the event of a century ago, but also the ancient origins of faith in your land. It was the providence of God that linked you to the See of Rome from the time of Saint Ninian, who preached to you the Gospel of salvation. And it is the power of God’s grace that has sustained your people throughout all the vicissitudes of centuries, and has brought forth abundant fruits of justice and holiness in Christian living.

Two years ago we offered to the honour of the universal Church “a glorious champion of your people, an ideal exemplar of your past history, a magnificent inspiration for your happy future” (PAUL VI, *Homily*, 17 October 1976). You remember it well; it was the canonization of John Ogilvie. On that occasion, as we shared “your pride and joy” (IDEM, *Address to Scottish pilgrims*, to 20 October 1976), our thoughts turned to all those at home. And today, once again, all the affection of our heart turns to the faithful of Scotland.

Through you we greet the clergy, the religious and the laity, who together with yourselves make up the one communion of the Church. We want them all to know of our paternal interest in them, and of our daily prayer for their wellbeing. Our special greeting goes to those who are remote from

diocesan centres, to those who live in distant points of the Hebrides, Orkney and Shetland-all of whom are close to us in the love of Christ.

We take this opportunity to speak a word about the role of the laity in the Church. Although much progress has been made in promoting the lay apostolate, the doctrine of the Second Vatican Council on this point is so rich that it deserves further reflection. Bishops must constantly recall to their people that the lay apostolate is “a sharing in the Church’s very mission of salvation. Through Baptism and Confirmation all are commissioned to that apostolate by the Lord himself”(*Lumen Gentium*, 33). The realization of this fact by the laity can give them a profound sense of their Christian identity and inspire them with fresh energy to fulfil their proper role. Their task is a mighty one: to work for the sanctification of the world from within, in the manner of leaven (Cfr. *Ibid.* 31). Through the laity, the world must be “permeated by the spirit of Christ, and more effectively achieve its purpose in justice, charity and peace. The laity have a principal role in the universal fulfilment of this task” (*Ibid.* 36). Working closely together, the clergy and laity can gain deep insights into the particular application of these principles; and the whole Church will be the stronger to the extent that the laity live out the truth of their specific vocation.

And as you exercise your own personal task as shepherds of God’s people, make every effort to explain not only the great dignity of the laity but also the source of their strength. This brings us to our second point: the Eucharist. Here, not only do priests fulfil their role and find their inspiration, but so do all the members of the Church. Indeed, the full and active participation of all the people in the sacred liturgy is “the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful derive the true Christian spirit” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 14). From the Eucharist the faithful go forth to carry out their proper role at the service of the Gospel, and to give their witness as lay people to the Kingdom of God. From the Eucharist they draw strength for the evangelizing activity that is their own in the political, social, economic, cultural and scientific fields-in the arts, in international life, in the sphere of the mass media and in every dimension of secular human activity (Cfr. PAULI PP. VI *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 70). Thus the power of the Paschal Mystery transforms the world and advances the Kingdom of God.

But to emphasize the marvellous unity of God’s plan, let us not hesitate to state that because the laity depend on the Eucharist they therefore depend on the priesthood, in order to fulfil their ecclesial role. The Council has said this well: “For the distinction which the Lord made between sacred ministers and the rest of the people of God entails a bond between them, since pastors and the other faithful are united by a mutual relationship” (*Lumen Gentium*, 32). And as you rightly give attention to proclaiming the dignity of the laity, we ask you to intensify your efforts in having your people pray for and promote vocations to the sacred priesthood. The need is great. The good of the whole Body of Christ is at stake. We ask you indeed to give priority and great personal attention to the preparation of students for the priesthood, to the doctrinal content of their courses and to all that touches the life of your seminaries.

Yes, Venerable Brothers: the laity, the Eucharist, vocations to the priesthood-these are the three principal subjects of our message to you today, as we confirm you in the faith of Peter and Paul: faith in Jesus Christ the Son of God and Saviour of the world.

With these reflections we assure you of our prayers for all your pastoral endeavours and we impart to you and to all your beloved people our special Apostolic Blessing.