



The Holy See

CELEBRATION OF THE HOLY MASS WITH THE NEW CARDINALS

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

1 July 1979

Beloved Brothers and Sisters!

1. Today I wish, together with you, to contemplate the Church fully "subject to Christ" (cf. Eph 5:24) as a faithful Bride. The last few days, which we have lived meditating together on the sacrifice of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, commit us to seek the manifestation of the mystery realized in their vocation, through the witness of faith and love, borne to the point of death. A manifestation, which we find throughout the history of the Church, throughout the centuries and the generations of her faithful sons and daughters, servants and pastors, *going back in this way to that sublime love*, with which Our Redeemer and Lord "loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water... that he might present the church to himself in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish" (Eph 5:25-27).

To that sublime love, to that Heart pierced on the Cross and open to the Church, his Bride, I wish today, together with you, to go *on a spiritual pilgrimage*, from which we ourselves must return "purified, strengthened and sanctified" in accordance with these days.

Here is the Church! The fruit of the inscrutable love of God in the Heart of his Son!

Here is the Church! Bringing the fruits of the love of the holy Apostles, of the Martyrs, of the Confessors and Virgins! Of the love of whole generations!

Here is the Church: our Mother and Bride at the same time! The goal of our love, our testimony and our sacrifice. The goal of our service and indefatigable work. The Church, *for which we live in*

order to unite ourselves with Christ in a unique love. The Church, for which you, Revered and Dear Brothers, created Cardinals in the Consistory yesterday, must now live even more intensely from now on uniting yourselves with Christ in a unique love for her.

2. The Church is in the world. You all constitute her living testimony in the world, arriving here from so many places distant in space, but, at the same time, close spiritually.

The Church is *in the world as a sign of the salvific will of God himself.* Is she not the Body of him whom the Father anointed and sent into the world "to bring good tidings to the afflicted, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound... to comfort all who mourn... to give them a garland instead of ashes... the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit" (Is 61:1-5)?

Should not the Church be all this? Should she not live by all this, if she is to respond to the salvific mission of him who is her Bridegroom and Head?

You know very well, Revered and Dear Brothers—and all the Churches from which you come know it too— into what language of facts, experiences, aspirations, sadness, suffering, persecution and hopes it would be necessary to translate that ancient prophetic text of Isaiah, in order that it might express, *in the language of our time*, how the Church is rooted in the world; how much she desires to be, in the world, a living sign of the salvific will of the Eternal Father with regard to every man and all humanity! The Church of our difficult age—of the second millennium that is drawing to a close—a period of extreme tensions and threats or of great fears and great expectations!

3. At all times this Church is *simple* with the same simplicity that our Lord and Master inspired in her with the word of the Gospel. How little is necessary for the Church "to begin to exist" among Men! "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Mt 18:20); and "If two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven" (Mt 18:19).

How little is necessary for this Church to exist, multiply and spread! That is decided by those two or three gathered in Christ's name and united through him, in prayer, with the Father. How little is necessary for this Church to exist everywhere, even in those places where, according to human "laws" she does not exist and cannot exist and where she is condemned to death! How little is necessary *for her to exist*, and realize her deepest substance!

For her to live *her perennial youth!* The same youth that the first Christians lived, who "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers... Breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favour with all the people". (Acts 2:42, 46-47), as we read today in the second reading

from the Acts of the Apostles. On reading this there reawaken not only the memories, but also the desires of *simplicity on the part of the Bride, who has just experienced the sacrifice of love of her Crucified Bridegroom* and rejoices in her generating fertility in the Holy Spirit when—as we read —"the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved" (Acts 2:48).

This Church is simple with the simplicity that is characteristic of her.

And she is *strong with that unique strength* which she received from the Lord: that unique strength! No other! "Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Mt 18:18).

Here is the specific quality of this strength of the Church. Neither man nor humanity knows such a strength, in any other dimension of this individual or social existence. She does not draw this strength from any field of her own temporariness or from any reserve of nature... *This strength comes only from God. Directly from God. This strength is redeemed by the Blood of her Redeemer and Bridegroom. It is the strength of the Holy Spirit.*

It forms an alliance with what is deepest in man: by means of faith, hope and charity it seeks—immutably seeks—the solutions in Heaven of what cannot be fully solved on earth.

4. Revered and Dear Brothers! How much we rejoice at the fact that you, newly created Cardinals, wed *this Church* today following the example of Christ! The sign of this wedding is the ring, which I will shortly put on your finger.

How we rejoice at these nuptials of yours, which bring into the life of the People of God, all over the earth, *a new inflow of love* and a new certainty of love! A new—we hope—efficacy of love. Of that love with which we have been loved and with which we must love one another. Love which comes from the Bridegroom and is for the Bridegroom.

Love, *by means of which the Church must be loved* with renewed fervour by each of you.

Love, by means of which she must express herself again in all the simplicity and the strength that she .received from the Lord.

Love by means of which the Church must become again "sine ruga et macula" for the Bridegroom.

I wish you this love, together with the whole People of God in Rome and in the world. I lay my wish in the hands of the *mother of the Church, the Bride of the Holy Spirit.*

