



The Holy See

MASS AT THE PONTIFICAL IRISH COLLEGE

HOMILY OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II

13 January 1980

Moladh go deo le Dia.

Praised be Jesus Christ.

Dearly beloved in Christ,

1. Today once again, in a very special way, the Pope belongs to Ireland!

After my visit to your land, it is a joy for me to come to the Pontifical Irish College and meet all those who live here: the priests and seminarians, and the Sisters of Saint John of God. My visit is also meant for the community of Saint Isidore's Franciscan College and Saint Patrick's Augustinian College. With the Cardinal Primate of all Ireland and with Brothers in the Episcopate, including former Rectors of the Irish College, we are celebrating together our unity in Jesus Christ and in his Church.

The place of our celebration is important for its contribution to the Church, for the impact it has had on the lives of the Irish, and for its responsibility to future generations. It is likewise important for the Christian witness of love that has been given here; one example well known to me is the hospitality furnished by the Irish College to Polish refugees after the Second World War. In this regard, the presence at this Mass of Monsignor Denis MacDaid is a living link with the splendid achievements of the past.

2. And so, with our history and our hopes, all of us are here together to seek light and strength in commemorating the Baptism of the Lord. As portrayed in the Gospels, the Baptism of Jesus marked the beginning of his public ministry. John the Baptist proclaimed the need for conversion,

and the great mystery of divine communion was revealed: the Holy Spirit descended on Christ, and God the Father pointed out his beloved Son to the world. From that moment on, Jesus pursued resolutely his mission of salvation. Our celebration today invites us to reflect personally on these three elements: conversion, communion and mission.

3. The role of John was to prepare for Christ. It was in the context of conversion that the communion existing in the life of the Most Holy Trinity was revealed. The Baptist was announcing an invitation to turn to God, to be conscious of sin, to repent, to walk in the truth of one's relationship with God. Meanwhile, Jesus himself had submitted to the penitential rite and was at prayer when the voice of the Father proclaimed him as Son: the one who is totus ad Patrem, the one who is totally devoted to the Father and living for him, the one totally enveloped in his love. We too are called to take on the attitude of Jesus towards his Father. The condition, however, for this is conversion: a daily, repeated, constant, sustained turning to God. Conversion is necessary to express the truth of the adoption of sons that is ours in Baptism. For in Baptism we were called to union with Christ in his death and Resurrection, and hence we were called to die to sin and to live for God. In Baptism the vivifying action of the Holy Spirit took place in us, and the Father now sees in us his only Son, Jesus Christ: "You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you".

4. The communion of the Most Holy Trinity goes on in our lives. Through Jesus Christ, the mystery of divine adoption takes place, as he who is the Unigenitus Dei Filius becomes the Primogenitus in multis fratribus. A former student of the Irish College, the Servant of God Dom Columba Marmion, has left to you and to the whole Church extensive writings of deep insight and great value on this mystery of the divine sonship and on the centrality of Jesus Christ in God's plan of sanctification.

5. In our daily lives the call to conversion and divine communion has practical requirements, if we are to walk in the profound truth of our vocation, in the sincerity of our relationship with the Father, through Christ and in the Holy Spirit. In practice, there must be an openness to the Father and to each other. Remember that Jesus is totus ad Patrem, and that he wanted the world to listen to him say: "I love the Father". Just this past week in my Wednesday audience I mentioned that man fulfils his nature only by "existing 'with someone' - and still more profoundly and more completely: existing 'for someone'". These words in turn reflect the teaching of the Second Vatican Council on the social nature of man.

We who in our ministry are called to form community on the supernatural basis of divine communion must first experience community ourselves in faith and love. This experience of community is one that is rooted in the earliest traditions of the Church: we too must be of one heart and one soul, united in the teaching of the Apostles, in fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayers.

To walk in the truth of our vocation means striving to please God rather than men, to be just in God's sight. It means a life-style that corresponds to the reality of our role in the Church today, a

life-style that takes into account the needs of our brethren and the ministry that we shall exercise tomorrow. Living the truth in love is a challenge to the simplicity of our lives, and to a self-discipline that manifests itself in diligent work and study - in responsible and accountable preparation for our mission of service to God's people.

In a special way, living the truth of our lives here and now - in Rome in the year 1980 - means fidelity to prayer, to contact with Jesus, to communion with the Blessed Trinity. The Evangelist points out that it was while Jesus was in prayer that the mystery of the Father's love was manifested and the communion of the Three Divine Persons was revealed. It is in prayer that we learn the mystery of Christ and the wisdom of the Cross. In prayer we perceive, in all their dimensions, the real needs of our brothers and sisters throughout the world; in prayer we are strengthened for the choices that lie ahead; in prayer we are fortified for the mission that Christ shares with us: to bring "true justice to the nations... to serve the cause of right".

Hence this house and all the religious houses and seminaries of Rome are meant to be houses of prayer, where Christ is formed in every generation. Because you are living in Rome, in a Diocese for which I personally must give a particular accounting to the Lord, you will understand how ardently I desire that Christ should be formed in you.

But towards this goal you must not walk alone. In a community of brethren who maintain alive and pure the same high ideals of Christ's priesthood you will find strength and support. In the communion of the Church you will find joy. Through the guidance of competent spiritual directors you will find encouragement and you will avoid self-deception; by turning to them you will, above all, render homage to the humanity of the Incarnate Word of God, who continues to sustain and guide the Church through the instrumentality of men.

6. And as you endeavour to accept fully the call to conversion and communion - the call to full life in Christ - the sense of your mission must grow more and more acute. In tranquillity and trust you must begin to experience ever more a sense of urgency: the urgency to communicate Christ and his saving Gospel.

By the grace of God there is now going on in Ireland a period of intense spiritual renewal. And all of you must become involved in this. You must prepare yourselves for this mission by work and study and, especially, prayer. In this regard I ask you to listen once again to the words I prepared for the students at Maynooth: "What I really want you to realize is this: that God counts on you: that he makes his plans, in a way, depend on your free collaboration, on the oblation of your lives, and on the generosity with which you follow the inspirations of the Holy Spirit in the depths of your hearts. The Catholic faith of Ireland today was linked, in God's plan, to the fidelity of Saint Patrick. And tomorrow, yes, tomorrow some part of God's plan will be linked to your fidelity - to the fervour with which you say yes to God's word in your lives".

7. The youth of Ireland have understood and responded very well to my call, the call to come to Christ who is "the way, and the truth, and the life". But they need your special gift, your help, your ministry, your priesthood, so that they can succeed in living the truth of their Christian vocation. Do not let them down. Go among them and be recognised, like the Apostles, as men who have been with Jesus, men who have been steeped in his word, and are aflame with his zeal: "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God... for I was sent for this purpose". But the success of this mission of yours depends on the authenticity of your conversion, on the degree that you are conformed to Jesus Christ, the beloved Son of the Eternal Father, the Son of Mary. Turn to her, and ask her help.

In the Eucharist that I am celebrating with you and for you today, I have present in my heart your families and friends, and the entire Irish nation. In a special way I am praying for the youth of Ireland. And today, to you and through you to all of them I wish to say once again: "Young people of Ireland, I love you! Young people of Ireland I bless you! I bless you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ". Amen.

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